

FREDERICKSBURG AND  
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(FREDERICKSBURG AND  
CHANCELLORSVILLE)

A STUDY OF THE  
FEDERAL OPERATIONS

BY

COLONEL J. E. GOUGH, v.c., c.m.g.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

BRIG.-GENERAL H. H. WILSON, c.b., d.s.o.

LONDON

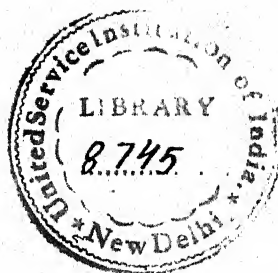
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## P R E F A C E

THE following pages are based on lectures delivered at the Staff College in 1912, and are an attempt to follow the Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville campaigns from the Federal point of view. My object has not been to write a history of the operations—for the history of a campaign necessarily gives the doings of both sides—but rather to draw a picture of war as it actually presents itself to soldiers in the field, to whom accurate knowledge of the enemy's movements and intentions is almost invariably denied. Soldiers should train themselves to realise all that this lack of reliable information means to a General in the field, who—no matter how well he may be served by his staff—is often in ignorance of the true situation, not only as regards the enemy, but also as regards portions of his own force; for it is this inevitable uncertainty which puts the metal of a Commander to the severest test.

Many a man is capable of taking responsibility

as long as the situation is quite clear; but it needs a leader of great courage and resolution to decide and strike swiftly when the situation is wrapped in obscurity and great issues are involved. The natural inclination is to defer decisive action in the hope of more definite information. Battles have been lost over and over again because the Commander has either waited too long for such information, or, seeking to minimise his risks, has struck but a half-hearted blow.

There is an enormous amount of literature on the American Civil War, and, as one book often contradicts another, it is sometimes difficult to arrive at the truth. I have, however, done my best to ascertain the facts, and, in addition to the Official Records, have relied chiefly on "The Story of the Civil War," by Ropes, and "The Campaign of Chancellorsville," by Bigelow. These two books are so fairly written and bear evidence of such careful research into all possible sources of information that their statements may be accepted as being as correct as is humanly possible.

Most soldiers have read Henderson's great book, "The Life of Stonewall Jackson," and regard it as a classic; and I am afraid it may be thought

presumptuous of me to select a subject which has been dealt with by such a master hand. My excuse is that Henderson naturally did not go as closely into the Federal operations as into those of the Confederates, and I have always felt that it would be of interest to study the Federal side of the story. In my lectures at the Staff College I took it for granted that my listeners had already made themselves acquainted with "Stonewall Jackson."

Considerable trouble has been taken to make the maps as accurate as possible. In the Chancellorsville maps the troops are shown as marked in Bigelow's "Campaign of Chancellorsville," which is, as far as I know, the best authority on that battle.

My thanks are particularly due to the Officers at the War College at Washington; both Brigadier-General Wotherspoon and Brigadier-General Mills were kind enough to give me the greatest assistance by answering my numerous inquiries.

J. E. G.

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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

Federal situation after the battle of Antietam—McClellan—The situation in the west—Cavalry raids—McClellan's reasons for delay—Lincoln's emancipation edict, and his reasons for urging an advance—Stuart's raid . . . . . pp. 1-25

## CHAPTER II

McClellan's advances—His leisurely movements—His removal—Burnside appointed Commander-in-Chief—Plans open to the Federals—The army moves to Falmouth . . . . . pp. 26-53

## CHAPTER III

Burnside loses an opportunity—Jackson joins Lee at Fredericksburg—General description of the battlefield—Want of confidence in Burnside—Federal plans—The passage of the river—Burnside too slow—His faulty orders for the battle . . . . . pp. 54-85

## CHAPTER IV

Danger of half-hearted attacks—Franklin's attack—Sumner's attack—The stone wall—Observations on the Federal operations—Outline of the Confederate operations—The withdrawal of the Federal army . . . . . pp. 86-118

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER V

Burnside resigns command—Hooker appointed Commander-in-Chief—Lincoln's letter to Hooker—Halleck's instructions to Hooker—General situation of the Federals—Hooker's re-organisation of the army—The IX Corps ordered to Newport News—Unlooked for effect of this move—Federal methods of protection—Bad handling of the cavalry—F. Lee makes a reconnaissance—Mosby—The cavalry action at Kellysville—Hooker's plans—He decides to turn the enemy's left while the cavalry sever Lee's communications—Longstreet attacks Suffolk—Hooker's supply arrangements—His instructions to the cavalry—Rainstorm prevents the cavalry crossing the river—Leakage of information—Confederate raid on the Baltimore and Ohio Railway—Hooker's new plans and a summary of his orders

pp. 119-173

## CHAPTER VI

Hooker's instructions to the right wing—Importance of studying enveloping tactics—The "fog-of-war" and its effect on a commander—Hooker's instructions to the left wing—Bad handling of the Federal cavalry—Secrecy and co-operation often bad bed-fellows—Federal transport—Passage of the Rappahannock and the Rapidan—Situation of the right wing on the evening of April 29—Operations of the left wing on April 29—The right wing reaches Chancellorsville and ordered to halt there—Operations of the left wing on April 30—The III Corps ordered to join the right wing—General Order No. 47—Strength of Hooker's army . pp. 174-195

## CHAPTER VII

The Pike and Plank roads—Operations on May 1—The 6th (New York) Cavalry have a night encounter—Hooker decides to await the arrival of the III Corps before advancing with the right wing—A portion of the right wing advances at 11 a.m. The order to retreat and Hooker's information at the time—Lee reconnoitres the Federal position—Averell's cavalry ordered back to the United States Ford—Situation at daylight on May 2—Hooker receives news of Jackson's turning movement—Sickles advances toward the Furnace—Howard receives repeated warnings of Jackson's movement—Hooker at 4.10 p.m. informs Sedgwick that "the enemy is fleeing, trying to save his trains"—The rout of the XI Corps . . . pp. 196-223



## CHAPTER VIII

Hooker's efforts to retrieve the situation—The charge of the 8th Cavalry—Critical situation—Birney's attempt to make a night attack—Averell arrives at Ely's Ford and his bivouac is fired into—Sedgwick ordered to cross at Fredericksburg and attack the enemy—Operations of the left wing on May 2—Operations of the right wing on May 3—Hooker takes up an inner defensive line with the I, V, and XI Corps—Stuart's repeated attacks—Hooker wounded—Couch ordered to withdraw the II, III, and XII Corps—The right wing remains strictly on the defensive while Sedgwick advances with the left wing—Sedgwick's operations on May 3—He carries the stone wall at the third assault—Unnecessary delay—Gibbon's division remains at Fredericksburg while Sedgwick advances—Value of Bank's Ford—The engagement at Salem Church—Sedgwick passes an anxious night—Lincoln's telegram to Butterfield and the answer—Sedgwick's operations on May 4—Messages to and from Sedgwick—An exasperating situation—Sedgwick attacked in the evening—His further correspondence with Hooker and eventual withdrawal across Bank's Ford—Hooker remains quiescent on May 4—Council of War during the night of May 4-5—Hooker's withdrawal across the United States Ford—Stoneman's operations—Observations on the general employment of the cavalry—Summary of the principal lessons of the campaign . . . . . pp. 224-285

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Maps Nos. 3, 7, 8 and 9, are extracts from and are on the same scale as MAP No. 1.

Maps Nos. 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17, are extracts from and are on the same scale as MAP No. 4.

## LIST OF MAPS

No.		
1.	GENERAL MAP OF VIRGINIA	<i>In pocket at the end of the book</i>
2.	OUTLINE MAP SHOWING CONFEDERATE RAIL- WAY . . . . .	PAGE 9
3.	POSITIONS ON NOVEMBER 7 . . . . .	31
4.	MAP OF FREDERICKSBURG AND CHANCELLORS- VILLE . . . . <i>In pocket at the end of the book</i>	
5.	FEDERAL POSITIONS ABOUT 8.30 A.M. ON DECEMBER 13 . . . . .	PAGE 73
6.	SUMNER'S AND HOOKER'S COMMANDS ABOUT 4 P.M., DECEMBER 13. . . . .	93
7.	FEDERAL POSITIONS ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 27-28 . . . . .	169
8.	FEDERAL POSITIONS ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 28-29 . . . . .	173
9.	FEDERAL POSITIONS ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 29-30 . . . . .	183

No.		PAGE
9.	FEDERAL POSITIONS ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 30 TO MAY 1 . . . .	183
10.	POSITIONS AT 1.30 P.M. ON MAY 1 . . . .	199
11.	" " 8 A.M. ON MAY 2 . . . .	213
12.	" " 7.15 P.M. " . . . .	225
13.	" " 9 P.M. " . . . .	227
14.	" " 5 A.M. ON MAY 3 . . . .	233
15.	SEDGWICK'S COLUMN ON MAY 3 AND 4 . . . .	249
16.	STONEMAN'S RAID APRIL 29 TO MAY 7 . . . .	265
17.	SITUATION OF JACKSON'S COLUMN AT 2 P.M. AND 5 P.M. ON MAY 2 . . . .	281

## INTRODUCTION

FEW wars are better worth the close study of Englishmen than the great campaign of 1861-65 in America.

It was fought by men of our own blood for a cause which both sides had much at heart, and, in its earlier stages, it was fought for the most part by armies recruited on the voluntary principle and led by officers who, with few exceptions, were innocent of the art and science of war.

This little volume has been written by a soldier for soldiers, and Colonel Gough could not have selected a more interesting period of which to treat than that which led up to, and embraced, the actions of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

He has used his opportunity well and even the most casual reader will find that he drives home the points he wishes to make in true soldierly spirit and style.

Some of these points are worthy of the attention of our civilian friends and masters; such, for example, as the clumsy and often disastrous interference, in matters military, of politicians

and amateur soldiers ; or again the lack of discipline, lack of moral with consequent straggling, shirking, and inefficiency of untrained armies of volunteers. Other points there are which concern all of us soldiers ; the immense importance of the personal equation in War—the man of character and the man of action—and how such men, or the lack of them, affect military operations in all their phases from the largest strategical conceptions to the smallest tactical movements ; questions of supply and transport, and how in the hands of inferior commanders these are allowed to dominate strategy instead of strategy dominating them ; the issue of orders and the issue of bad orders ; the handling of cavalry ; the tactical employment of all arms and the value of fighting all three arms whilst placing our enemy in such a position that he can only employ two of them ; these and many other matters of interest are treated by Colonel Gough in a thoroughly practical and soldierly manner, and a close study of his narrative, his deductions, and his comments will well repay any military student who wishes to see things as they really are and not as they are often presented by those who treat of war without any knowledge, either historical or practical, of what war means.

HENRY WILSON.

May, 1913.

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United States Institution

## Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville

### CHAPTER I

WE take up our story immediately after the battle of Antietam (see Map No. 1), which was fought on September 16 and 17, 1862, and was, perhaps, the bloodiest action of the Civil War.

In this battle Lee took such risks that even to read of them makes the ordinary mortal doubt whether he was justified. Such, however, is the power of personality in war that Lee's subordinates never hesitated for one moment in their loyal obedience, and never, probably, did the men put up a grander fight. Few generals have inspired their Army to a greater extent than Lee.

On the night of September 18 Lee withdrew his shattered army across the Potomac, but there was practically no pursuit. The Federals were thinking more of defending themselves than of following up their advantage—so great was the respect in which they held Lee and his Army.

On the 19th the Federal Cavalry, with the V Corps (Porter's) in support, made a feeble

effort to follow up the Confederates and succeeded in capturing five guns. Lee, however, sent back Hill's Corps on the 20th, and checked the Federals, who were driven back roughly. No further attempt at pursuit was made. Let us now examine the position of the Federals.

McClellan was in command of the Field Army about Antietam. It is a common belief that McClellan was not much use as a soldier; but, although not in the same class as Lee, he had many great qualities. The troops trusted him and felt safe under his command; he was immensely popular with the Army and was commonly known as "Little Mac." His presence invariably heartened up the soldiers; we have only to read the account of his enthusiastic reception by Pope's defeated troops, when he rode out from Washington after the second battle of Bull's Run, to realise that the men would fight their best for him.

McClellan was thirty-five years of age. He had passed first out of West Point, had served in the Mexican War, been present in the Crimea, and had retired from the Army in 1857 to take up railway work.

Always a student of war, he was a good organiser, and his strategical plans were frequently brilliant, but he almost invariably failed in his execution of them.

The truth appears to be that he was of an



over-cautious nature, and always wanted to make things safe before he would risk everything in a decisive battle. Time and again we find him exaggerating the strength of the enemy opposed to him—a failing which prevented him from ever achieving real success as a Commander. On the other hand he was learning from experience; he was being taught by Lee.

It is of interest to note how the generals, on both sides, improved with practical experience. Sherman and Grant are two notable instances.

In order to realise McClellan's position, it will be necessary to give a brief account of his previous doings in the War.

In October 1861, three months after the first battle of Bull's Run, General Scott resigned, and McClellan was appointed Commander-in-Chief, under the President, of all the Federal Forces. It was a task few soldiers would envy him. The frontier extended for over a thousand miles (say from London to Naples). The so-called Army was little more than a disorganised rabble, mostly recruits and men badly scared after the experiences at Bull's Run.

More and more recruits were pouring in; Officers and N.C.O.'s to train this multitude, were few and far between. Yet an Army had to be fashioned somehow.

The Government were in a panic, and it is doubtful whether Lincoln was really of much

assistance to McClellan, as the President, at that time, had a habit of interfering in purely military matters.

Before long friction arose, and it cannot truthfully be said that McClellan was free from blame in permitting this unfortunate state of affairs to arise; but politics and political jobbery had far too great a say in the appointments to high commands, and even unduly affected strategical plans.

From October 1861 to March 1862, a period of five months, McClellan continued to act as C.-in-C., while at the same time he personally superintended the work in connection with the raising, organising, and training of the Field Army round Washington.

In March 1862, it was decided to send the Army round by sea to the Peninsula, and in consequence McClellan was relieved of the work of C.-in-C., to enable him to take personal command of the Army of the Potomac. General Halleck was appointed C.-in-C., or really Chief of the Staff to Lincoln, in July 1862. The Federal forces were divided into Departments, nominally in Halleck's hands, but in reality the operations were controlled by the President.

From March 26 to the middle of August the Army of the Potomac was operating in the Peninsula under McClellan. During this campaign there was some exceptionally heavy fight-

ing, which culminated in the Seven Days' Battle; Lee's final assault on Malvern Hill, on the James R., being repulsed with great loss.

During the Peninsular Campaign, and especially towards its close, unseemly wrangles and friction occurred between McClellan on the one hand and Lincoln and Halleck on the other, the withdrawal from the Peninsula being carried out much against McClellan's wishes.

The Army of the Potomac was hurried round by sea to Aquia Creek and Alexandria, and the troops as they landed were dispatched to join Pope, who was trying to oppose Lee in Northern Virginia. McClellan's troops were taken away from his command, in many instances the divisions being sent to Pope without their artillery and transport, which had not yet arrived from the Peninsula.

McClellan was practically left without a command—and it was only when Pope was disastrously defeated at the second Bull's Run on August 30 and 31, 1862, that Lincoln again turned to McClellan. There is no doubt that McClellan felt very sore at seeing his troops sent into action while he, himself, had to remain a passive spectator at Alexandria, and from all records it appears as though his men were much distressed at losing him. This is curious, as it is difficult to understand how the campaign in the Peninsula could have endeared

McClellan to his troops, but such was the case. We all know how General Buller had this hold over his troops, in spite of a series of reverses; why, it is difficult to say, but some men have this great quality—it counts for much in war.

When the news of the second Bull's Run began to come into Washington, there was undoubtedly a bad panic, which was not confined to the population generally, but even shook the Government. At this crisis, Lincoln turned to McClellan, who was asked to defend Washington. Lincoln appears to have had doubts whether the place could be held, but McClellan seems to have been confident and to have inspired confidence.

It is related how he at once set to work to arrange some sort of defence and collect and organise the mass of detached units and fugitives—how he then rode out to meet Pope's retiring troops.

The battle of Chantilly was going on at the time, and the noise of the firing could be distinctly heard in Washington. The retiring Federals were in the lowest depths of despondency and rage. The appearance of McClellan was everywhere greeted with yells of delight by the soldiers, who crowded round him—shouting that all would be well now that "Little Mac" had come back to them again.

However, Lee decided that an attempt on

Washington held out small prospect of success. He is reported to have said that it was his inability to feed his Army outside Washington which led him to prefer an invasion of Maryland, where his troops could live on the country.

When McClellan realised that Lee had decided on the invasion of Northern territory, he moved out to meet him, without being given definite authority by Lincoln. He was still technically only in command of the defences of Washington, and, as he says himself, he went with a halter round his neck. Lincoln, although he never actually objected to the move, did not sanction it—he just let things go on.

Halleck, in this crisis, seems to have done next to nothing. He was pompous, obstinate, and rather stupid, and no friend of McClellan's. Apparently he belonged to the class of man who is much to the front in peace and in an office, but who is quite incapable of rising to meet a real crisis. The Antietam, or Sharpsburg, Campaign in many ways reflects considerable credit on McClellan. Remember, the troops were much demoralised and disorganised; they had just been badly beaten at the Second Bull's Run; the machinery and staff arrangements at Washington were in a chaotic state.

Yet somehow or other McClellan was able to pull the army together and to set it going to try its luck once more against the redoubtable

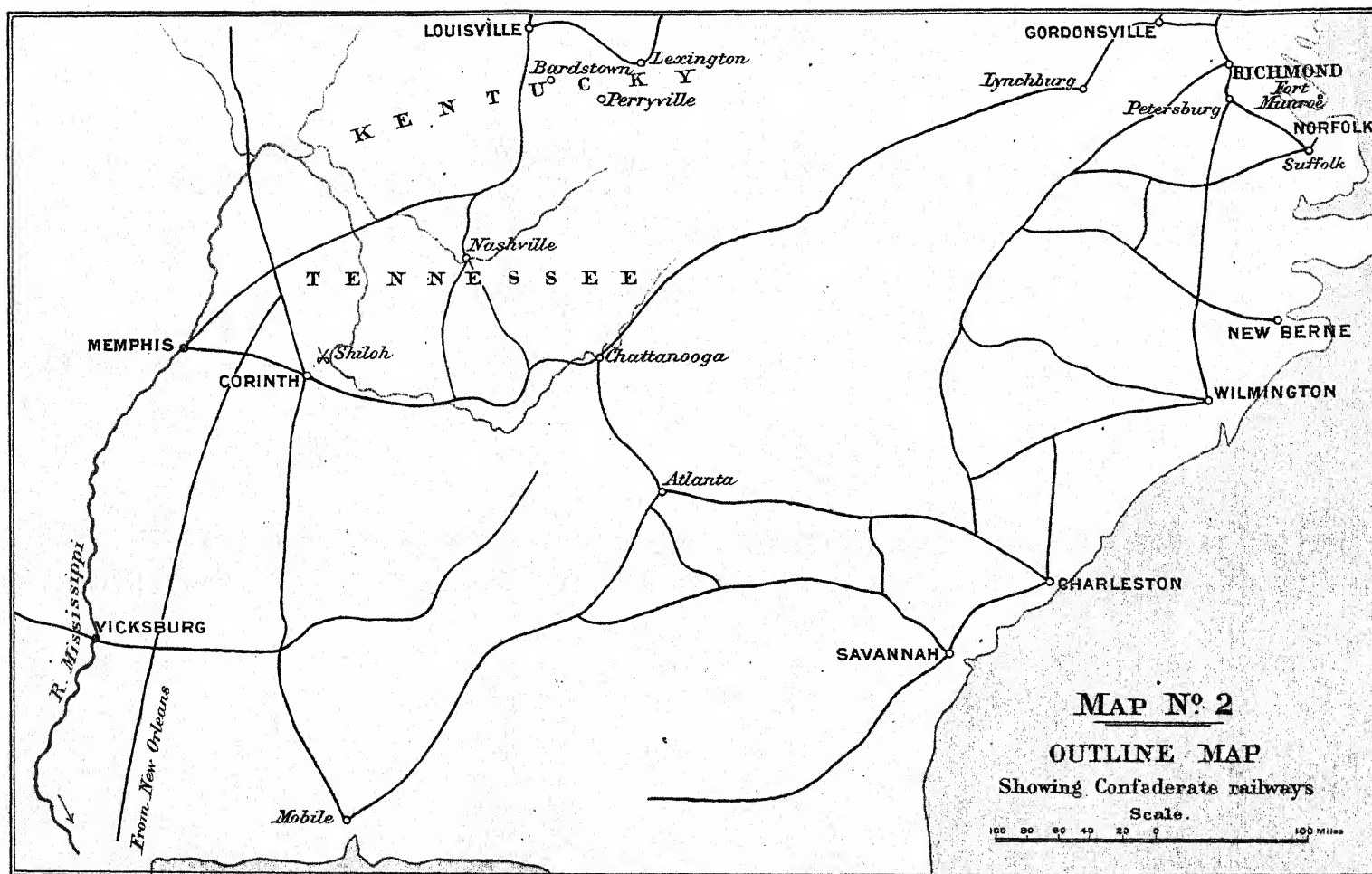
Lee. It was not a bad performance. He moved out of Washington on September 10—ten days after the battle of Bull's Run—with about 85,000 men.

In the Campaign that followed McClellan again showed that he was an over-cautious commander; but it must be remembered that he was weak in Cavalry as compared with the Confederates, and that Stuart commanded the hostile Cavalry. Every one is probably acquainted with the incident of the lost despatch. A copy of Lee's orders was picked up by a Federal trooper wrapped round a bundle of cigars. Seldom has a commander had the plans of his enemy revealed to him so fully, and at such an opportune moment. McClellan, however, did not rise to the occasion. He was too slow; he lost his chance.

The battle of Antietam followed on September 16 and 17. The Federal attacks were made, as usual, in piecemeal fashion. It cannot be said that McClellan proved himself a good commander in a fight, and his subordinates, notably Burnside, did not rise to the occasion. Still he went very near to inflicting a crushing defeat on Lee.

This rough outline of McClellan's work during the fourteen months preceding the time at which we take up the story, is given in order that an opinion may be formed as to what manner of man McClellan was, and to give some idea of all he had gone through. We can thus approach





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the study of the campaign with a certain amount of human sympathy. It is, undoubtedly, a great mistake to ignore the human element when studying war—it is not a game of chess.

So much for McClellan.

Let us glance at the general situation, and see how it affects our particular problem.

Washington, at this time, was defended by a ring of forts twenty-five to thirty miles in circumference. General Banks was in command.

The forts required a garrison of some 15,000 men, and 500 heavy guns were in position.

In Washington there were approximately :—

11,000 town guards.

47,000 regular troops.

The numbers in Washington varied from day to day—new recruits, new units, stragglers, and fugitives were constantly coming in—while at the same time reinforcements were frequently being sent out to the Field Army.

We may take it that the strength fluctuated between 60,000 and 75,000.

The situation in the west was briefly as follows (see Map No. 2) :—

The battle of Shiloh had been fought on April 6 and 7, 1862, when McClellan was fighting in the Peninsula.

Lincoln had long cherished a design to occupy

East Tennessee, principally with the object of protecting loyal inhabitants in that province and in Kentucky. Halleck, who was at that time in command in the West, advanced with the utmost caution to Corinth; from thence he despatched General Buell with 30,000 men to advance along the railway to Chattanooga, repairing the railway as he went.

Buell found this an impossible task, as the railway was torn up behind him as fast as he repaired it in front. Eventually, Buell persuaded Halleck to agree to making Nashville the advanced base for an advance on Chattanooga; the railway from Nashville to Louisville ran through friendly country and was more or less directly covered by the force at Nashville.

The Confederates under Bragg were in the meantime concentrating some 30,000 men at Chattanooga, and were anxious to delay Buell's advance until they were ready to meet him. In order to do this, Bragg decided to make use of his Cavalry to break up the railway between Nashville and Louisville.

The Cavalry raids that took place are of considerable interest; and as they are excellent examples of when a Cavalry raid is and when it is not justified, perhaps it will not be out of place to briefly outline the situation.

About July 15, Buell was preparing to advance from Nashville; but he was dependent upon the

railway for supplies, as he had not formed a big advanced depot.

This was the situation when Forrest with 1,400 Confederate Cavalry made a raid on the railway, and broke it up so effectively that it took over a fortnight to repair.

Buell had to postpone his move until the line was in working order. He then again proposed to advance, but again he had no depot of supplies, and again he depended on the railway for his daily supplies. This time Morgan raided on August 12 and broke up the line. Once more Buell had to postpone his advance.

By this time Buell's chance had gone. The Confederates had concentrated and began advancing in superior strength. Buell had to fall back and by September 17, the day Antietam was fought, the situation was :—

*Federals*, about Louisville, 58,000 strong (mostly recruits).

*Confederates*, about Bardstown (40 miles S.E. of Louisville), 31,000 strong ; about Lexington (70 miles E. of Louisville), 18,000 strong.

A battle was expected any day.

On October 8, the indecisive action of Perryville was fought, the Confederates withdrawing at night. While this had been taking place, the forces left behind about Corinth had come into

collision at Iuka (Mississippi) on September 19, and again at Corinth on October 3 and 4; the Federals being successful in both cases.

Much has been written about the numerous Cavalry raids during the American Civil War. There is something to be learnt from the Confederate raids quoted above.

Note the circumstances—Buell was depending on the railway for his supplies, no depots had been formed, and consequently when the railway was cut the Federals had to retire, in order to obtain food, etc.

Later on in the year, at the end of December, the actual positions of the troops were much the same as above: namely, the Federals round Nashville, the Confederates between Nashville and Chattanooga.

Bragg, anxious to delay the Federal advance, resorted to the same sort of Cavalry raid which had been so successful on the two previous occasions. Morgan was sent to break up the railway, this he did quite successfully; but the Federals, instead of retiring, advanced the very next day and, what is more, continued to advance. Why was this? The explanation is simple. The Federal General (Rosecrans) had learnt by experience; he had collected two million rations at Nashville; he no longer depended upon the railway. Under these circumstances Morgan's raid was useless.

The general principle stands out quite clearly, and it is a sound one to bear in mind if a raid on the enemy's communications is contemplated. If the enemy is depending on the railway for his communications—*i.e.* his daily supply of food, ammunition, etc.—and we can succeed in breaking up the railway so that it will take some days to repair, the raid may have far-reaching results. But when the enemy is not dependent on his railway, the raid, even if successful, will probably have little effect on his operations.

This short summary of the situation in the west gives a broad general idea of how things stood immediately after the battle of Antietam. We can now return to our particular problem and follow up the story which will bring us to the battle of Fredericksburg.

We may be fairly certain that McClellan had accurate information of Lee's dispositions (see Map No. 1). In which case he knew that the Confederate forces were halted in the Opequan Valley between Winchester and Martinsburg, with Cavalry watching their front and flanks.

The numbers of the Confederates were probably not so easy to arrive at. As already mentioned, McClellan habitually exaggerated the enemy's strength. In his letters of that date he always refers to the superior strength of the enemy. As

a matter of fact, the Confederates had only 40,000 men at the battle of Antietam, but McClellan appears to have thought they had more like 80,000 to 100,000.

It is an outstanding feature of the war that there were enormous numbers of stragglers on both sides. This straggling makes it extremely difficult to arrive at the exact strength of the opposing forces at any particular date.

We know that Lee had only about 40,000 men present at Antietam; we know he lost some 11,000 men. Yet on October 18, one month later, we find that Lee's strength was 68,000—and that the majority of the reinforcements were made up of returned stragglers. The Federals were in much the same state. General Banks says that there were close on 17,000 soldiers wandering about Washington who ought to have been with their units at the front; this was just before Antietam.

The reason for this enormous wastage by straggling was the lack of discipline which will always be found in non-regular armies. Would our Territorials do any better if they had to undergo the same high test? It is more than doubtful.

At the same time all writers agree that the straggling was not altogether owing to lack of discipline. In many cases it was caused by genuine physical weakness and lack of shoes; but if we go to the root of this, it is obvious



that in a well-organised Army there would have been no lack of shoes or supplies to keep the men in a proper state of health.

The Confederates were worse off, as shoes, supplies, and medical comforts were not obtainable in their country.

McClellan was obviously in deadly earnest when he said his Army was in need of reorganisation and supplies. He expressly says, "It must be borne constantly in mind that the purpose of the advance from Washington was simply to meet the necessities of the moment by frustrating Lee's invasion of the Northern States, and when that was accomplished to push with the utmost rapidity the work of reorganisation and supply; so that the new campaign might be inaugurated with the Army in a condition to prosecute it to a successful termination without intermission."

There is a good deal in this, but the argument applies more to the opening of a campaign than to the time just after a battle. Still, we would not be drawing a true picture of McClellan's position if we overlooked these difficulties.

The truth appears to be that neither McClellan nor his generals realised what a heavy blow the Confederates had received at Antietam. McClellan, although he always claimed Antietam as a victory, only thought he had saved the North from invasion.

He did not for one moment appear to recognise that if his Army was in a bad way, it was a practical certainty that the Confederates must be in a worse plight.

It is easy for us to come to such a conclusion now, but at the time it was, perhaps, not so obvious. Our own difficulties and troubles loom large in war, while those of the enemy dwindle to nothing. It is only by training our judgment in peace that we can hope to appreciate a situation correctly in war.

The Federal Army was approximately 100,000 strong, consisting of the I, II, V, VI, IX, and XII Corps, and the Cavalry Brigades of Pleasanton and Averell. There was also a Pontoon Train.

The II and XII Corps had been sent to hold Harper's Ferry and fortify the heights in that neighbourhood. The remainder of the Army remained about Antietam.

Some insight can be obtained into McClellan's mind when we find him expressing concern as to the safety of the two Corps at Harper's Ferry. He hoped they could hold their own until supported!

On September 22 Lincoln took a bold step—he issued his famous Emancipation Edict, to the effect that on January 1, 1863, all slaves in States in rebellion were to be recognised as free.

This Edict was not popular in the Army, the soldiers were not really fighting for the cause of their black brother. Most of them were



fighting to maintain the Constitution and to prevent the Southern States from seceding.

On the other hand the Edict was popular among the Abolitionists—who might be called the “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” people. There can be no doubt, however, that it gained for the North the support of Foreign Powers.

The Edict itself violated the Constitution—the question of slavery being a State, not a Federal affair, but it was hardly a time to consider delicate matters of law when the whole country was in arms.

It was a well known fact that McClellan did not agree with the Edict, and naturally this did not tend to lessen the distrust between Lincoln and himself. All the same, the latter issued an excellent Army Order enjoining acquiescence in any policy of the Administration.

Lincoln having issued the Edict, very naturally attached great importance to proving to the world that he was in a position to enforce it; consequently he urged McClellan to advance, adding that advantage should be taken in the fine autumn weather and of the good roads. Later on the roads were certain to get very bad.

On October 1, Lincoln came to the Federal Camp, to see things for himself. He went over the late battlefields with McClellan, and the latter was left with the impression that the President would give him his hearty support.

McClellan tells us that Lincoln remarked that he (McClellan) was inclined to make things too sure before moving—which remark exactly hit the nail on the head. Lincoln and McClellan never met again.

No sooner had the President returned to Washington than Halleck wrote to McClellan on October 6: "to cross the Potomac, give battle to the enemy and drive him South;" he was further informed that if he should so move as to cover Washington (*i.e.* on the east side of the Blue Ridge), he would be reinforced by 30,000 (*i.e.* III and XI Corps), but if he moved up the Shenandoah he could not expect more than 12,000. Lincoln advised the inside line, but did not order it.

On October 7, McClellan answered this letter—saying he would go up the Shenandoah; although he preferred the inside line except for the fact that, if he moved by that route, the enemy would invade Northern territory again, as the Potomac was low and could be easily crossed.

There was no love lost between Halleck and McClellan. Considerable friction had arisen over the supply of the Army. As one officer puts it, "Officials at Washington spent their energy in combating the requisitions of McClellan's Army, and instead of seeing that supplies reached their destination, rested content with perfunctory declarations that the stores had been sent."

It is a curious thing how friction arises, and perhaps it is as well to lay stress on such incidents in order that we may avoid falling into similar errors. There was only a short railway journey between the Army and Washington; a personal interview and a little tact would probably have put things right.

McClellan, in the meantime, had quite made up his mind not to move until the Army had been supplied with what he considered necessary. Whether he was right or wrong, is difficult for us to say now; but it certainly looks as though he was wrong, considering that he was in the middle of a campaign and had just won a battle.

But it would be a mistake to imagine that such delays will not sometimes be forced on a Commander, be he ever so dashing. It is often unavoidable; for example, Lord Roberts thought it advisable to wait some weeks both at Bloemfontein and again at Pretoria. In his case it was a question of supply.

Whatever McClellan's reasons for quiescence may have been, Lee, apparently, had no such scruples. Yet his difficulties must have been much greater than McClellan's.

On October 10, McClellan received information that a large force of Cavalry had crossed the Potomac at Black Creek (15 miles west of Hagerstown) and only the same distance from McClellan's Headquarters.

The enemy were proceeding north.

As so often happens in war the information that followed was of a confusing nature. McClellan set troops everywhere in motion with the object of cutting off Stuart. For Stuart, of course it was, who was leading another raid. There is no necessity to follow out the movements in great detail. Pleasanton's and Averell's Cavalry Brigades were sent in pursuit. The Federal posts on the Potomac were all warned to look out for Stuart's return, and it was hoped, with reasonable assurance, that this time Stuart would be trapped. But this was not to be. Those who took part in the de Wet hunts in South Africa will need no reminder that a mounted force, if well handled and unencumbered with transport, is not easily brought to book.

The question was, how could Stuart be intercepted? McClellan must have received all sorts of contradictory rumours. The enemy were here, the enemy were there; they were going north, they were going east. Little by little their movements must have been revealed to McClellan, but always too late. As a matter of fact, Stuart, we know now, was never far from McClellan's Headquarters; Henderson says seldom more than 30 miles.

On the night of the 10th the enemy had halted in the streets of Chambersburg, capturing some 500 horses and destroying supplies there. They

had covered 40 miles since daybreak—it seemed as though they must surely be rather exhausted and their horses tired out. But on the 11th they moved east; through Cashtown, through Emmotsburg, and down into the Monocay Valley. Stuart's capture appeared inevitable. There was a large garrison at Harper's Ferry, and posts guarding the Fords. There was a post of 4,500 men at Poolesville. Yet, at daybreak on the 12th, Stuart passed through Hyattstown (11 miles south-east of Frederick) and, avoiding Poolesville, crossed the Potomac a little above Leesburg. There was a garrison of 200 men at the Ford, but they were unable to hold back Stuart's 1,800 men and 4 guns. Just as the Confederate Cavalry was coming down to the Ford, Pleasanton's advanced scouts came into action; but before his main body could come up, the enemy were across and riding off leisurely via Leesburg to rejoin Lee the other side of the Blue Ridge.

Was this raid a success or not? Was Lee any better off, or McClellan any worse off? Was it worth the risk? Because risk there was and Stuart had luck on his side, though luck would have meant little if Stuart had been a less able commander.

Stuart's loss was one man wounded and a few scouts captured; he had covered a distance of 126 miles—between daylight on the 10th and 2 p.m. on the 12th (say in 56 hours).

Lee apparently was the gainer to this extent:—

1. He now knew that the Army of the Potomac was not being withdrawn; in fact, reinforcements were being received. It was obvious, therefore, that no over-sea expedition was being prepared against Richmond.

2. Hostages had been brought in in the shape of prominent civilians, who were held to ensure the safety of Virginian citizen prisoners.

3. 500 horses had been captured.

4. Stuart rather pompously claims that his raid "excited a consternation among the property owners in Pennsylvania which beggared description." Very probably; but although this spectacle may have tickled Stuart's vanity, it cannot have had any military value beyond creating a temporary panic amongst the property owners.

5. Undoubtedly Lee's Army must have gained in "morale." There is no getting away from the fact that successful affairs, such as this, put heart into the men. It makes them pleased and happy with themselves. It makes them think they are better men than their enemy.

It means a fine fighting spirit.

Now, how was McClellan worse off?

1. His Army must have lost in "morale." It always disheartens troops to know that the enemy has scored. It always makes friction when people are looking about to see whom to blame; everybody puts the blame on some one else.



2. Pleasanton's and Averell's Cavalry brigades had been broken down owing to their hard marching in their futile pursuit. Henderson says Pleasanton's brigade marched 78 miles in 24 hours, and Averell's 200 miles in four days. The cavalry required rest and several thousand horses before it could be fit for service again.

A serious blow this.

3. Besides shaking the morale of the Army, Stuart's ride had an effect which neither Lee nor Stuart could well have foreseen. Lincoln and the Government in Washington were much agitated; their confidence, such as it was, in McClellan was seriously shaken. Relations became more strained than ever.

Colonel Irwin,<sup>1</sup> of the U.S. Army, has given us a small story which makes this clear. He tells us how, as Lincoln was returning from a review near Washington, in high spirits and conversing freely, some one said suddenly, "Mr. President, what about McClellan?" Without looking at his questioner, Lincoln drew a ring with the point of his stick and said quietly: "When I was a boy we used to play a game—'Three times round and out.' Stuart has been round him twice; if he goes round him once more, gentlemen, McClellan will be out."

On the whole this raid of Stuart's entailed such risks and offered such small results that it is

<sup>1</sup> "Battles and Leaders," iii. 70.

difficult to justify Lee's action. Still, as things turned out the risks were successfully avoided and the results were greater than could reasonably have been expected.

But bear this in mind. If Stuart had been captured, as he well might have been without any fault on his part, history and the Southern people at the time would have condemned Lee's action.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, although we may come to this conclusion—how can any soldier withhold his admiration from Lee, who could thus quietly take such momentous decisions, and who could hit out in this bold manner when even a daring commander might well have shrunk from the risks?

An inferior force has often, in fact nearly always, to take risks that would be unjustifiable for a superior force. The superior force can well play a safer game and rely upon its big battalions; but when we are the inferior force, this safe game generally means disaster in the end. The more we study the American Civil War, the greater becomes our respect and admiration for Lee.

On October 13, Lincoln sat down and wrote to McClellan. He must have written this letter shortly after receiving the news that Stuart had successfully avoided pursuit. The letter begins:

<sup>1</sup> Ropes.



"MY DEAR GENERAL,

"You remember my speaking to you of what I called your over-cautiousness. Are you not over-cautious when you assume that you cannot do what the enemy is constantly doing? Should you not claim to be at least his equal in prowess and act upon the claim? . . . Change positions with the enemy, and think you not he would break your communications with Richmond within the next twenty-four hours? You dread his going into Pennsylvania; but if he does so in full force, he gives up his communication to you absolutely, and you have nothing to do but to follow and ruin him. . . . Exclusive of the water line, you are now nearer Richmond than the enemy is, by the route that you can and the enemy must take. . . . It is all easy if our troops march as well as the enemy, and it is unmanly to say they cannot do it. This letter is in no sense an order."

As Henderson points out, Lincoln seemed to think that an Army could turn round and retrace its steps without any difficulty, thereby showing a complete ignorance of the handling of large forces.

Officers who desire to study an interesting problem can consider McClellan's position, and his instructions—and after carefully studying the map, they can form their own opinion as to what McClellan should have done.

## CHAPTER II

AFTER a delay of nearly six weeks, McClellan at last began to move. It might be thought that he had only delayed in order to be in a position to make a sudden and rapid advance. But this, as we shall see, was not the case. All through McClellan's service we find that he was too cautious and too slow; his actual plans were frequently excellent, but he failed in the execution of them. Compare McClellan's leisurely movements with the lightning-like strokes of Lee. It cannot be too often reiterated that it is only by striking hard and quick that success in war is gained.

In many ways our failures to relieve Ladysmith can be put down to the slowness and stateliness of our operations; they remind us unpleasantly of McClellan's strategy, and the failure in both cases can to a great extent be attributed to the same cause.

On October 26 the Army began crossing the Potomac, between Harper's Ferry and Berlin (see Map No. 1). The XII Corps remained behind to hold Harper's Ferry. Pleasanton's two Cavalry

Brigades covered the front and right flank, and occupied Purcellville (ten miles west of Leesburg). Snicker's and Ashby's Gaps in the mountains were successfully occupied by the II and V Corps, in order to protect the line of march. The general line of advance was on Warrenton (about 45 miles south of Harper's Ferry).

According to previous arrangements the III and XI Corps and Bayard's Cavalry Brigade were to move out of the Washington Defences and join McClellan. On November 2 these reinforcements were between Centreville and Fairfax Court House.

Perhaps it would be as well to let McClellan explain the plan in his own words:—

"It was my intention," he writes, "if upon reaching Ashby's Gap, I found the enemy in force between it and the Potomac in the Shenandoah Valley, to move into that valley and endeavour to gain their rear. But I did not expect this, but hoped to separate their army and beat it in detail—or force the enemy to concentrate as far back as Gordonsville, and thus place my army in position either to adopt the Fredericksburg line or to be removed to the Peninsula, if, as I expected, it was impossible to supply my army by the Orange and Alexandria railway beyond Culpeper Court House."

The Manassas Gap railway ran very conveniently for McClellan's plan, for as soon as the Army reached Thoroughfare Gap it would become

available as a possible line of supply, and the communications with Harper's Ferry could then be abandoned. The advantages of this are obvious.

The Quartermaster-General at Washington reported that the Orange and Alexandria railway could carry 600 tons daily—an ample supply, provided the railway was not raided and did not break down.

McClellan's plan as outlined by himself was not at all a bad one; but everything depended upon rapidity of movement. There is an old saying that once the sword is drawn, "There is no surprise like celerity."

Just imagine the careful previous arrangements, the secrecy and the rapidity of the blow, if Lee or Jackson had been carrying out such a plan.

One can imagine Lee advancing rapidly between the Blue Ridge and the Bull's Run Mountains; Snicker's and Ashby's Gaps being seized and troops pushed boldly beyond them with the intention of making the enemy believe that the advance would take place through these gaps. In the meantime the real striking force would be advancing *rapidly* on Manassas Gap and Front Royal. If on arrival at Front Royal the enemy had not slipped south by Strasburg and disappeared down the road on the far side of the Masunuttons, the chances of war would all have been in favour of the Federals: their line of supply, along the Manassas railway, would have run directly behind

them; while the Confederates, if defeated, would have been in a parlous situation.

After much study of this problem, it is suggested that this solution was about the best open to McClellan; but it cannot too often be impressed upon soldiers that the plan is only the beginning of the business, all must depend upon the method of execution and the *smoothness*, *rapidity*, and *secrecy* with which it is carried out.

Without doubt Lord Roberts' success at Kimberley and Paardeburg can be directly traced to this method of execution. It must have been a peculiar satisfaction to Henderson, who was on Lord Roberts' staff, to see the lessons which he had learnt from Lee and Stonewall Jackson so successfully applied by his own immediate chief.

But to return to McClellan. Had *he* learnt anything from Jackson and Lee? Apparently not. He commenced crossing the Potomac on October 26; his last Division crossed on November 2. That is to say he took eight days to cross! These leisurely movements foredoomed the whole scheme to failure; yet the British Army moved just as slowly at the passage of the Tugela before Spion Kop.

On November 2 Pleasanton with his Cavalry fought a successful engagement with the enemy's Cavalry at Union, midway between Snicker's Gap and Ashby's Gap. The Federal Army, therefore, was 20 miles in depth from head to tail. Its leading troops had only advanced 20 miles in 8 *days*. Up

to this date (*the 2nd*) Lee had remained about Winchester, and it seems probable that McClellan was aware of this fact.

The advance continued slowly, and on the 3rd the Cavalry again successfully drove back Stuart's troopers at Upperville, below Ashby's Gap. On the 5th Pleasanton once more defeated the hostile Cavalry, this time just below Chester Gap. But it was too late, Lee had already sent Longstreet and some 40,000 men across the Blue Ridge—the main body at Chester Gap, while one Division and the Cavalry had passed through Ashby's Gap. Jackson with the rest of Lee's army remained about Winchester.

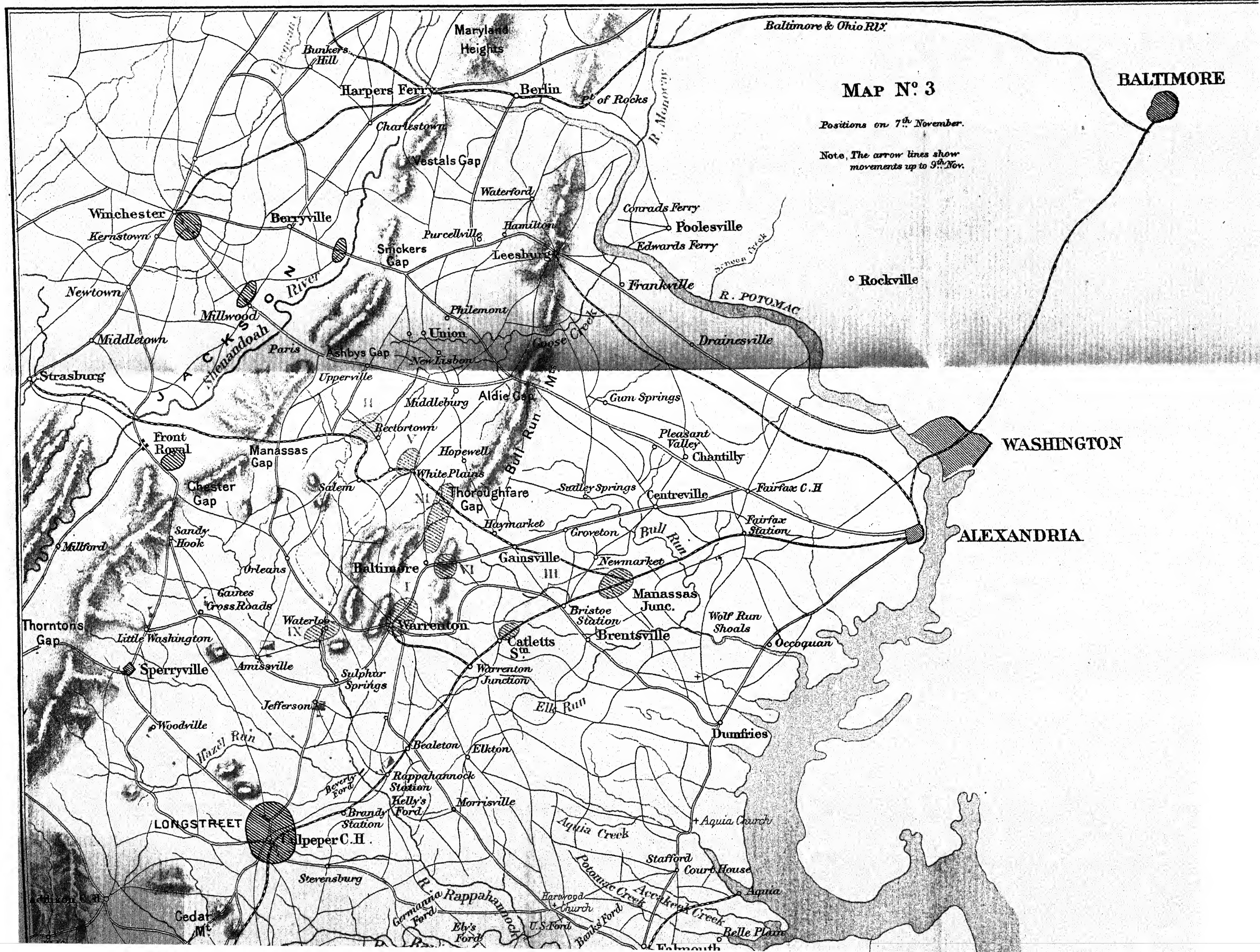
However, it must be borne in mind that McClellan was not aware of this move for certain, until about November 8; but there can be little doubt that he must have had strong suspicions on the subject by November 5. Pleasanton had reported, as early as October 29, that Longstreet with 18,000 men was at Upperville *en route* for Manassas.<sup>1</sup> After all, it is seldom that a commander can hope to obtain absolutely accurate information in war.

On November 5 the Federal Army ceased drawing supplies from Harper's Ferry, as the two leading corps had reached Rectortown—thus opening up the Manassas Gap railway. This

<sup>1</sup> This information, although not correct at the time, shows that McClellan had warning of the Confederate move.









brought McClellan into touch with the reinforcements from Washington, consisting of the XI Corps about Thoroughfare Gap, the III Corps between Manassas Junction and Warrenton Junction, and Bayard's Cavalry at Rappahannock station.

By November 7 the situation was as follows (see Map No. 3):—

- I Corps, Warrenton.
- II „ Rectorstown.
- III „ between Manassas Junction and Warrenton.
- V „ White Plains.
- VI „ New Baltimore.
- IX „ Waterloo.
- XI „ New Baltimore.

*Pleasanton's Cavalry*: one brigade at Amissville, one brigade at Jefferson, with outposts on the Hazel Run and flank picquets at Newby's Cross Roads, Gaines' Cross Roads, Sperryville, and Little Washington; and a detached squadron near Manassas Gap.

*Bayard's Cavalry*: Rappahannock Station.

McClellan's Headquarters were at Rectorstown.

The Federal Army thus occupied some 30 miles from front to rear, and some 25 miles from flank to flank. Lee's Headquarters were

only about 15 miles from the nearest Federal Corps (the IX); Jackson was about the same distance from the II Corps; while Longstreet and Jackson were separated by nearly 60 miles.

From the map, it looks as though the game was altogether in the hands of McClellan. So it might have been, if he had done something and done it quickly. Probably the situation was not quite so clear to McClellan as it is to us looking at the map; but judging from the official records he had a very good idea of the real state of affairs.

In any case, matters were taken out of his hands. As he was sitting in his tent at Rector-town on the evening of November 7, in a blinding snowstorm, two General Officers asked to see him. One was General Buckingham, the bearer of despatches instructing McClellan to hand over command at once to General Burnside; the other was General Burnside—a personal friend.

McClellan handed over command with a good grace. Burnside was not at all anxious to take up the command; he was diffident about his own capacity. It was decided that the orders already issued by McClellan for the concentration round Warrenton should be allowed to stand. This meant the bringing up of the II and V Corps (see Map No. 3).

By this decision the idea of striking at Jackson was practically abandoned.

McClellan remained with the Army till November 9 and accompanied Burnside and the Headquarters to Warrenton. He spent the time explaining the situation to the new commander, who had been told to submit his plan to the Washington authorities.

Just think of the folly of choosing such a moment to change commanders—with the Army in the field within striking distance of the enemy! The need for instant action was imperative; it was no time for discussion, yet the new commander was ordered to submit a plan to Washington, where, presumably, his scheme would be criticised, and either approved or condemned. Eventually the so-called Commander in the Field would be told whether he could proceed with his plan or not. It is almost inconceivable that men of even ordinary common sense could be guilty of such downright folly, and yet Lincoln had not only plenty of common sense, but in many ways he was very near a genius and his great object in life was the success of the Northern cause. We can only attribute his action to a want of confidence in his Generals and an absolute ignorance of war—an ignorance which is common in even the astutest minds unless war has been studied or nature has endowed them with a natural bent in that direction.

We read that the Federal Army received the news of McClellan's removal with grief and

disappointment.<sup>1</sup> As he rode to take the train at Warrenton, the troops formed up of their own accord—at one moment the men broke their ranks, uncoupled McClellan's car, and beseeching him to stay with them, gave vent to the bitterest imprecations against those who had deprived them of their beloved commander. McClellan stepped out on to the platform and there was instant silence; he made the men a short address, ending up with the words: "Stand by General Burnside as you have stood by me, and all will be well."

A Federal officer writes: "Every heart was filled with love and grief, every voice was raised in shouts expressive of devotion and indignation; and when the chief had passed out of sight, the romance of war was over for the Army of the Potomac."

Thus passed McClellan.

The Army not only regretted the old chief but the new chief, Burnside, had not their confidence. He was not a brilliant man, and the Army had not forgotten that his slowness had been one of the principal causes of the want of success at Antietam. The Federal Government was doing its best to ruin the morale of the Army, which received another

<sup>1</sup> See "Battles and Leaders," iii. 104.

blow in the recall of Fitzjohn Porter, who had done so well at Gaines Mill and Malvern Hill.

It has often been said that the Federals were on the point of a great success, or at any rate on the eve of a decisive battle.

But judging from McClellan's previous actions and from his own report, this is not at all so certain.

If Lee had been in McClellan's place, or even if Grant had been in command, it would have been a practical certainty that something decisive would have taken place at once. They were both men of action, determined men, who hit hard and hit quickly, who never acknowledged defeat until hard fighting had proved it to them.

McClellan writes: "Had I remained in command, I should have made the attempt to divide the enemy, and either beating Longstreet separately, or forcing him to fall back, at least to Gordonsville, to effect his junction with Jackson's Corps. Could he (Longstreet) have been brought to battle within reach of my supplies, I cannot doubt that the result would have been a brilliant victory for our Army."

This is hardly the language of a man confident in himself; he saw his difficulties too clearly and did not grasp the possibilities of the situation.

As Ropes says: "One might object to McClellan's speaking of dividing the Army of his enemy, seeing that it was divided already, and it is to

be noticed also that McClellan implies that there would have been a limit to the extent of his advance, fixed by his ability to supply the Army by the use of the railway."

These words of McClellan's show the limits of his ability, and Ropes' criticisms are very sound and well repay study.

Ropes goes on to say that Lee and Longstreet could not possibly have expected to win a battle against such odds, and that there was nothing to prevent them from retreating to Gordonsville and there uniting with Jackson, and that they would have destroyed the railway behind them.

This may be so, but there was just one thing that could have prevented Longstreet from retreating to Gordonsville, *i.e.* a really rapid advance on a broadish front. But to have been successful this advance must have come as a surprise, and it must have been made rapidly.

Imagine a Lee in command of the Federals, and just recall the rapid movement he made with Jackson's force before the second Bull's Run. This is the sort of movement which might have met the case. Notice the handling of the Cavalry on both sides. It was on a far higher level than we find in 1866 or 1870. Neither side had any idea of wrapping their Cavalry in cotton wool. Both sides were using their Cavalry to "cover." Certainly they might have done more than they apparently did to

“discover”—but I say “apparently” advisedly, as there may have been Cavalry patrols out on missions of discovery which I have not been able to trace in the records; or it is possible that the Commanders were sufficiently well informed by other means.

A plan that might have offered Burnside a good chance of success would have been to close up his Infantry Corps behind his Cavalry picquets along the Hazel Run; with his right on the Jefferson—Culpeper Road, and his left on the Rappahannock Station—Stevenburg<sup>1</sup> Road, and from there make a sudden advance with Pleasanton's Cavalry forward on the right flank, and Bayard's Cavalry forward on the left flank. Given a fine dashing fighter, such as Jackson, in command of the troops on the left, Lee would have been a fortunate man if he had escaped disaster.

Anyhow, whether the suggested solution is agreed with or not, it makes an interesting problem to work out, and much is to be learnt from it.

Before we could form a reasoned judgment, the following facts, among others, would require consideration :

We may take it that Burnside knew that Lee had lately reorganised his Army into two Corps : this had been done after the battle of Antietam.

<sup>1</sup> Five miles East of Culpeper.



The strength of these Corps was almost certainly over-estimated. We should probably be fairly close to the mark if we put Burnside's estimate of each Corps at 45,000, and he appears to have thought Stuart had 8,000 Cavalry.

As a matter of fact, even now, authorities like Ropes and Henderson do not agree as to Lee's strength. Steele puts the Corps at 40,000 each, while Henderson puts them at 32,000 each, with 7,200 Cavalry under Stuart.

Although we are accustomed to say that interior lines can be turned to great advantage in war, and we quote Napoleon's first campaign, Grant's operations before Vicksburg, and, as we shall see later, Lee himself at Chancellorsville; still, in this particular case there were difficulties which should not be overlooked.

A glance at the map shows us that Jackson's position threatened two things; first an invasion of Pennsylvania and secondly Burnside's line of communication—the Orange and Alexandria railway.

The invasion of Pennsylvania was a regular nightmare with the Washington administration, and we find McClellan had left some 15,000 men about Harper's Ferry and Antietam to deal with this possibility. These 15,000 men took no part in the decisive fighting of the campaign we are now studying.

In addition, the Federals had a force of some

88,000 men locked up for the passive defence of Washington and of the Baltimore and Ohio railway.

So we find some 103,000 men on the defensive, while for offensive purposes only 123,000 men, under Burnside, were available.

It has already been mentioned that McClellan originally decided to advance up the Shenandoah Valley, instead of on the east side of the Blue Ridge, simply because of his fears of an invasion, and it was only when the Potomac rose that he thought he was justified in taking the eastern route.

So we must realise that the threat of invasion was a real one as far as Burnside was concerned.

As for the threat of an advance from the Shenandoah against the railway line, this also was a serious matter for the Federals. We should try and realise their position. The Army was absolutely dependent on this line, it was operating in an unfriendly country, and the further it advanced the more vulnerable would its communications become.

An attempt was made in the previous chapter to show the effect of cutting a line of communications. We saw how Buell had to give up all idea of advancing on Chattanooga, as he was dependent upon the railway for his supply from day to day; and how on the other hand Rosecrans, when faced with an identical situation, met it successfully by forming a large advanced base,

thus making himself independent of the railway for some considerable time.

Why should not Burnside have dealt with the situation in much the same way as Rosecrans? He might have collected a week's supply at the railhead—which was certainly as far forward as Warrenton Junction. If he had been able to do this, Jackson's threat on the railway would not have loomed so large in his imagination. At the same time the Official Records are full of references to friction between Army officers and railway officials. On this very date (November 9) there was a telegram from the Q.M.G. at Washington complaining that the whole working of the line had been delayed three hours and the line blocked, owing to the refusal of "a man named Stowe" to unload the cars unless the trains were shunted to the most convenient place for his fatigue party. Attention is called to this, as there may be some "Stowes" in our Army.

Also do not let us overlook Jackson's difficulties. In order to break up the railway he would have had to advance as far as Manassas Junction—a distance of some forty odd miles from Front Royal; having arrived there, he would have had to get back; and how was Jackson to keep his own Army supplied during the operation? Again consider Jackson's strength as compared with that of the Federals.

There was another factor which greatly affected the problem. Lincoln, in his letter to McClellan, rather implied that the latter could cut Lee's communications with Richmond, and he appears to have thought that such action would have been on all fours with Lee cutting the Northern communications. But this was not so. The Confederate Army was in a friendly country and could, therefore, more easily subsist on local supplies. Also, Lee had two main sources of supply—he was not by any means dependent upon the Richmond and Gordonsville railway alone; Staunton and the Shenandoah Valley formed Lee's second line.<sup>1</sup>

A study of the map shows us at once the advantages this afforded to Lee, and the freedom of manœuvre he gained thereby. It was some situation such as this, that General Wilson had in his mind when he referred to the advantages of basing oneself on an arc.<sup>2</sup>

But Burnside also had a possible second line of supply, as the Northerners had command of the sea with all its attendant advantages. He could base himself on Aquia Creek, and later on Port Royal, and later again on the James River: this was the plan adopted by Grant when he was given command. There was also

<sup>1</sup> Henderson lays great stress on this point—see "Stonewall Jackson," vol. ii. p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to a lecture given by General Wilson at the Staff College.

a railway from Aquia Creek, via Fredericksburg to Richmond. That Lee appreciated the possibility of a move in this direction is clear from the fact that he had a small force (of three Cavalry regiments, one battalion of Infantry and a battery of Artillery) at Fredericksburg for observation—and had issued instructions to break up the railway between Falmouth and Aquia Creek. But although, when we go closely into the situation, we find that Lee's division of his Army into two equal parts did to a great extent threaten the Northerners, still, we cannot get away from the fact that the Confederates were divided, and divided by some sixty miles, while the Federals were in the centre, within striking distance, and in greatly superior force.

This appears to be the dominating factor; the other considerations, although of importance and requiring careful thought, were comparatively minor matters. To allow these minor considerations to dictate the strategy simply meant going off on side issues, always a fatal thing in war.

It was not as though Lee was in sufficient strength to justify an attempt to bring off a convergent attack on the battlefield, after the style of Sadowa. In any case, to do this meant that Lee must advance and attack—which apparently he had no intention of doing.

Should Burnside have attacked Jackson or Lee? The problem can be whittled down to this: He

certainly ought to have attacked one or the other, as nothing decisive can be gained except by fighting; and how was it possible to have a better opportunity?

Lee's position was altogether different—with his inferior numbers he had but a small chance of winning a victory if it came to fighting. His object was to stop the Federal advance and only to fight if a favourable opportunity occurred. From what he himself wrote at the time and from his actions, it seems reasonable to assume that Lee hoped to achieve his object by manœuvre rather than by fighting. For instance, on November 10 he wrote to the Secretary of War: "The enemy is so strong in numbers that I think it preferable to baffle his designs by manœuvring, rather than resist his advance by main force." Again, he says: "As long as Jackson can secure his retirement west of the Masunuttons, I think it advantageous that he should be in a position to threaten the enemy's flank and rear, and thus prevent his advance southwards east of the Blue Ridge. Jackson has been directed accordingly, and should the enemy descend into the valley, Longstreet will attack his rear and cut off his communications."

All this points to the fact that Lee was trying to gain his object, not by fighting, but by playing on the fears and apprehensions of his enemy.

He was not going to attack: he proposed to



wait and, if the enemy advanced on Jackson, then the latter would avoid decisive fighting while Longstreet attacked the Federal rear and line of communications. If the enemy advanced on Longstreet, then he was to fall back and Jackson was to attack the enemy's communications. But all the time he hoped and expected that the Federals would be afraid to advance.

Not only do Lee's own statements confirm this view, but, if we consider Lee's problem, the solution suggested seems well adapted to meet such over-cautious and unenterprising generals as McClellan and Burnside. As we know, Lee made a study of his enemy's character, and he carefully perused the Northern papers. What he learnt from these sources was of great assistance to him in deciding on his strategy. Longstreet tells us in "Battles and Leaders," that the news of McClellan's removal was received almost at once at Lee's headquarters. Lee said he regretted to part with McClellan, for, he added, "we always understood each other so well. I fear they may continue to make these changes till they find some one whom I don't understand."

Jackson was, of course, in some danger of being cut off, if the Federals could seize Strasburg. That Lee thoroughly realised this risk, we know; as he particularly warned Jackson about Strasburg, and even, at one time, ordered him to rejoin Longstreet; but the order to withdraw was countermanded on



receipt of a letter from Jackson. What was in this letter we do not know, as unfortunately Jackson's letter book has been lost. But Lee and Jackson may have argued the problem out as follows:—

Jackson's flank position frightened the Federals, because they thought he actually meant to take the offensive—either at once or on the first favourable opportunity. It is seldom, if ever, of any use to take up a flank position simply with the idea of sitting still, its full value only is obtained if the offensive is taken from it. Of course, the threat of an advance may be sufficient in itself; but the threat should be a real one and should deceive the enemy. If Jackson fell back to Strasburg, it certainly would be safer; but, on the other hand, it would not be nearly so likely to make the Federals apprehensive. Therefore, it was worth the risk, and Jackson's force remained well forward; but, at the same time, he guarded his vulnerable spot, Strasburg, by keeping a big detachment (one Division apparently) at Front Royal.

We must remember that Lee had the most complete confidence in Jackson, and he, therefore, frequently left him a freer hand than would have been advisable with an ordinary general.

The pros and cons of this situation have been entered into fairly fully, as nothing is so apt to

lead us into drawing false lessons as a perfunctory study of war.

Here we find Lee dividing his army in the face of the enemy, which is generally understood to be the worst possible strategy; yet, when we realise the particular circumstances, there is no doubt that Lee's strategy was far from bad. Would Lee have adopted the course he did if he had been opposed by a Wellington or even a Grant? He probably would have done nothing of the sort, and here we find the key which ought to help us to shape our actions in war. Also, bear in mind the peculiar situation as regards the line of supplies for the opposing Armies. Try and remember that, although we cannot expect to find this problem reproduced exactly in any future war, still, by studying such cases closely, we can certainly train our soldierly judgment, and thus be better equipped as soldiers and commanders when our turn comes.

Lee's divided forces were in a decidedly critical situation. Each of his forces might be compared to a boxer, standing balanced on his toes, ready to avoid a blow and, at the same time, prepared to attack if the enemy's attention was distracted elsewhere. Each of Lee's forces required to be commanded by a General of the highest order; and in this respect the Southerners were fortunate, Lee, himself, being with one force, while Jackson, the trusted lieutenant, was in command of the other.

It is obvious that where Lee's plans might have failed in execution would have been if the enemy had attacked Lee and feinted at Jackson, or vice versa. In such a case *both* detached Commanders would have had to judge the situation correctly—no easy matter; if *either* made a mistake it would have meant failure.

How was Lee to feel sure that the force opposed to him was only feinting? Perhaps it might be the enemy's real blow. In one case it meant attacking boldly, and in the other case it meant falling back and avoiding anything like decisive fighting.

When we come to the battle of Chancellorsville, we shall see how things can go wrong in a case of this sort. Theoretically it seems plain sailing, but in war things do not always pan out as we anticipated on paper.

It appears as though an attack on Longstreet offered the best chance of success. Jackson's Corps was not so easily accessible, the Blue Ridge and the Shenandoah offered well-defined obstacles and limited the lines of advance; such was not the case as regards Longstreet. Otherwise there was not much to choose between the objectives; except this—if Jackson could be forestalled at Front Royal *and* Strasburg the results might, and probably would, be decisive. But it was a big "if."

On the whole, therefore, a rapid attack on Longstreet and a bluff against Jackson to keep

him quiet, seems to be the best solution. There was one other advantage about this plan that has not yet been mentioned. Say that Longstreet made no mistake, and that neither his subordinate commanders nor his troops made any mistakes, and that he fell back successfully behind the Rapidan; Burnside would have crossed the Rapahannock and he could have deflected his march so as to cross the Rapidan at Germanna and Ely Fords, and moved on Spottsylvania—being supplied from either Fredericksburg or Port Royal.

This was the plan adopted by Grant under somewhat similar conditions: the advantages are obvious; a direct advance from Spottsylvania on Richmond would be open—this alone might well oblige Lee to fight—and the line of supply would be free from all threats by Jackson.

It may be said that Lee would have attacked Burnside, as he did Grant, when involved in the densely wooded country immediately south of Germanna Ford. But in this case Lee had only Longstreet's Corps with which to attack, while in the case of Grant's operation he had his whole Army. Burnside could have asked for nothing better than battle under such circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Having now discussed the problem, let us see what Burnside actually did.

As we have seen, Burnside took over command on the evening of November 7, and at the same

<sup>1</sup> Ropes deals with this plan very fully.

time he was told to submit his plan. This he did on November 9, it arrived at Washington on the 10th, but was not shown to Lincoln until the 11th—so little importance did the authorities attach to celerity. The plan was roughly this—(1) To give up the Orange and Alexandria railway as the line of supply and make Aquia Creek the base. (2) To try to make the enemy think he was going to attack Longstreet, and under cover of this make a rapid advance on Fredericksburg, with the object of making an advance on Richmond from there. (3) Burnside asked that supplies and a pontoon train, sufficient to span Rappahannock with two tracks, should be sent to Falmouth to await the arrival of the Army.

We have already discussed the possible plans in considerable detail, so there is no necessity to criticise this move beyond calling attention to the following points :—

The move to Falmouth was doubtless undertaken with the object of freeing the line of communications from the constant threat of Jackson.

Burnside's whole plan appears to have been dominated by questions of supply, and places and localities assume undue importance. The only real objective in war is the enemy's armies, and Burnside does not appear to have realised this.

Why go to Falmouth, and have the obstacle of the Rappahannock in front of him, when he could just as easily have crossed the river by the higher

fords and occupied Fredericksburg with the obstacle behind him?

The plan to a great extent depended upon the arrival of the pontoon train. Why base a plan on such a chancy matter?<sup>1</sup>

Burnside made no sort of effort to take advantage of the enemy's division of his forces.

Lincoln considered the plan at his leisure—from November 11 till 14. With such procedure it is not surprising that misfortune dogged the footsteps of the Federal Army. On the 14th, we are told, Lincoln gave his reluctant assent—not, be it noted, his approval. We are told by Halleck that both he and Lincoln were under the impression that Burnside meant to cross the Rappahannock *above* Falmouth; they had no idea that it was meant to cross the river *at* the latter place.

Directly he assumed command, Burnside reorganised the Army into what he called "Grand Divisions" and a "Reserve Corps." The order of battle now became:—

<i>Right Grand Division,</i>	{	II Corps (Couch)
General Sumner.	{	IX „ (Wilcox)
<i>Centre Grand Division,</i>	{	III „ (Stoneman)
General Hooker.	{	V „ (Butterfield)
<i>Left Grand Division,</i>	{	I „ (Reynolds)
General Franklin.	{	VI „ (Smith)
<i>Reserve Corps.</i>		XI „ (Sigel)

<sup>1</sup> The pontoon train was back at Berlin, although, apparently, Burnside thought it was at Alexandria.



It is of importance to realise that this re-organisation involved changes in the Corps Commanders, some of whom were naturally promoted to command "Grand Divisions"; Divisions and Brigades were, of course, affected in a similar manner. Hardly an advisable step with a battle imminent. Moreover, it must have meant the improvisation of new staffs, and the break up of some of the old ones; also a dangerous experiment just before a battle.

It is worth noting that the Corps, Divisions, and Brigades, were numerically much weaker than similar formations in the British Army of to-day. The corps varied in strength between 12,000 and 24,000, and most of them had three divisions. Thus a Federal Corps was approximately equivalent to a British Division. Orders to reach the troops had to percolate through an unnecessary number of channels: from the C.-in-C. to Corps, then to Divisions, then to Brigades, and finally to Battalions—yet Burnside wilfully added an additional channel when he formed "Grand Divisions." With an organisation such as the British Army has to-day, one of these channels is eliminated—*i.e.* orders go from the C.-in-C. straight to Divisions (equal in strength to a Federal Corps).<sup>1</sup>

I may mention here that the Grand Division organisation was not considered a success, and

<sup>1</sup> This subject will be referred to later.



later on, when Hooker in due course succeeded Burnside, the "Grand Divisions" were abolished.

On the morning of November 15 Sumner, with his Right Grand Division, started for Falmouth, where he arrived on the 17th.

On arrival there it was found that the pontoons had not arrived. There was a small force of the enemy observing Fredericksburg and the river line. The bridges across the river, which was 130 to 200 yards broad at Fredericksburg, had been destroyed. The river was very low at the time, and could be forded at many places.

Sumner at once requested leave to occupy Fredericksburg, which could have been done without any difficulty; but Burnside said NO. Apparently he was afraid that the river might rise, and the force on the far bank might thus be isolated. He decided not to cross until the pontoons had arrived. When we consider that Longstreet's whole corps only numbered some 40,000 men, and Sumner's Grand Division by itself was equal in strength, it is obvious that the Federals had gained nothing by exchanging McClellan for Burnside.

The pontoons did not arrive until the 25th, one week after Sumner.

The remainder of the Army followed Sumner, and the whole Army, less the XI Corps, had arrived by the 20th. (The XI Corps was left

behind about Manassas Junction to guard the O. & R. Railway—a bad mistake.) Apparently Burnside made no serious effort to make Lee believe that an advance was intended against Longstreet at Culpeper, although in the plan he submitted to the President he distinctly said that such was his intention. On the 21st Longstreet's Corps arrived opposite Fredericksburg, and all idea of crossing the Rappahannock unopposed had vanished.

Here we must leave Burnside and continue the story in the next chapter.

It will be noticed that Burnside's plan miscarried, and the reason he himself gives for this failure is that the pontoons did not arrive in time.

Apart from the fact that a commander worthy of his salt does not allow his plans to be frustrated by matters of this sort, there is a lesson to be learnt which should be carefully noted by all officers. Avoid making a plan which depends upon *everything* panning out *exactly* as expected. If we bear this in mind when on service we shall be prepared for some of the unpleasant surprises which are always happening in war.

### CHAPTER III

WE left Burnside with his whole Army (less the XI Corps), say 122,000 strong, concentrated about Falmouth by November 20.

Opposite him, on the Fredericksburg heights, was Longstreet's Corps and Stuart's Cavalry (about 42,000 all told), who had arrived by the 21st. The river, about 130 to 200 yards broad, separated the opposing forces; it was low and fordable in a good many places.

About 110 miles away was Jackson with about 38,000 men, in the neighbourhood of Winchester.

Burnside undoubtedly was fairly correctly informed as to the situation, although he probably exaggerated the strength of the enemy; but he made no attempt to take advantage of the opportunity.

It is extraordinary how often a sort of mental paralysis seizes a commander at the moment for action. On paper we see the situation clearly, and it is hard to realise what a different aspect war, with its uncertainty and responsibility, gives to a military problem. It is of the utmost importance that soldiers should realise this; it will help us in war to make up our minds to ACT,

and act QUICKLY. If history is studied carefully and its lessons taken to heart, we can hardly fail to grasp the fact that success and safety are more likely to be gained by action than by any other means. We can undoubtedly train our judgment and our resolution by a close study of past campaigns.

I have been unable to discover when Burnside first heard definitely that Jackson was leaving Winchester, and marching to join Longstreet. We know that Jackson left Winchester on November 22, moving via Strasburg and Newmarket, and thence through Fisher's Gap, and arrived at Orange Court House on November 27. He was then still 36 miles from Fredericksburg.

The probabilities are that Burnside knew by the 25th that Jackson had left Winchester, and by the 28th or 29th at latest he must have heard of his arrival at Orange Court House.

The pontoons had arrived at Falmouth on the 25th, but still Burnside made no effort to strike at Longstreet; apparently he must have considered the Federal position as too strong for attack, or he was waiting for more definite information—a fruitful source of disaster to the indifferent General.

In the meantime, Burnside's opportunity was fast slipping away. On the 30th Jackson's force joined Longstreet. For ten whole days had Burnside remained quiescent—what wasted days, and what trouble he was laying up for himself in the near future!

Before we enter into the details of the approaching battle, there are a few observations on the general strategy which can conveniently be made here.

In this campaign we find Lee, a really great master of the art of war, opposed to two such commanders as McClellan and Burnside. McClellan—a shrewd, careful man, but slow and over-cautious as the critical time approached; Burnside—rather a stupid man, also slow, but a determined fighter once the battle had begun. Lee only had some 70,000 men to oppose to about 120,000; but this being the case it would have seemed all the more necessary to keep his forces together, and not to have laid himself open to defeat in detail. Yet what do we find? Twice—and both times for a considerable number of days—Lee kept half his force within striking distance of the enemy's main body, while the other half of his force was beyond supporting distance.

At the first blush this does not look like applying the great principle of concentration for the battle, and it is just this which makes the study of this campaign such a valuable one. The Commandant was only saying the other day that principles are rather danger signals than signposts pointing the only way to success.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to a lecture given at the Staff College by Major-General W. R. Robertson.

The truth probably is that Lee wished, above all things, to avoid decisive fighting until the chances were more in his favour. At the same time, it was imperative to stop the Federal advance; it must have appeared almost impossible to combine these two objects.

Lee found the solution in the character of his opponents and in their sensitiveness as to their lines of supply, and the nervousness of the Federal Government as regards Washington and an invasion of Northern territory—a nervousness which, it is worth noting, was caused by political rather than military reasons. The solution, however, involved the taking of great risks; but knowing as Lee did the character of his opponents, these risks were not so great as appear on paper.

If McClellan had remained in command, the chances are that Longstreet would have been attacked; but as the only hope of bringing him to decisive action would have been in the suddenness and rapidity of the blow, it is more than doubtful whether McClellan's execution of his plan would have been successful. The only argument that makes one think it might have been otherwise, is that Lee and Longstreet both seem to have thought that Jackson would be attacked while a containing force would be left to keep Longstreet busy. Under these circumstances Lee would have been fortunate indeed if Longstreet had not delayed his retirement too long.



The main point, however, is—that it is extremely doubtful whether Lee would have employed the strategy he did if he had been opposed by an abler, or rather a more daring, General. *We must be extremely careful, therefore, of drawing lessons for the future from this campaign.* The lessons are there, very much so, but they are not altogether upon the surface.

It is not proposed to enter into the details of Lee's movements, but we have discussed some of his strategy when dealing with that of the Federals, and the reader will perhaps forgive me if I offer the following observations :

When a force is divided like Lee's Army, it is essential that both detachments should have first-class commanders. It will be noticed that Lee went himself with Longstreet. I cannot help feeling that he did this principally because he knew Jackson was more capable than Longstreet—not that Longstreet was not a very able General, but Jackson was an altogether exceptional man.

Reading Lee's correspondence with Jackson during the critical time when the two forces were divided, one is struck by the discretion given to Jackson. He was told the situation and Lee's intentions, and was then left complete freedom of action.

On November 6—that is to say, the day before McClellan was removed, and when the situation was much as shown in Map No. 3—Lee was



apprehensive that the enemy proposed to attack Jackson and hold Longstreet; he, therefore, ordered Jackson up the valley to Swift Run Gap, while Longstreet was prepared to fall back to Madison Court House.

On the 8th this order was repeated. As far as I can discover, Jackson took no steps to carry out these orders. He, however, wrote to Lee, and the latter then gave him absolute discretion to remain in the valley and operate against the Federal line of communication, or even to make a demonstration against Pennsylvania.

It is interesting to compare Lee's methods with those of Jackson. The latter seldom, if ever, divulged his plans or intentions; he moved his subordinates about like so many chessmen. We must not forget that Jackson had only to deal with a comparatively small force, and consequently there was not the same necessity for giving discretion to subordinates; but we find that many of Jackson's commanders fretted considerably under his iron and unsympathetic rule—notably Hill at Cedar Mountain. For a long time Jackson's command was anything but a happy family.

It was only when he had proved himself a General of the highest order that he obtained the full confidence of his officers and men. His troops were happy under him because they trusted him and felt proud of him, and no doubt some

of Jackson's glory was reflected down to the private soldier.

I have always felt rather a curiosity to know how Jackson would have served Lee, if the latter had happened to have as cold and unsympathetic a temperament as himself. And would Jackson have made such a good subordinate if Lee had treated him as he (Jackson) treated his subordinates?

It would be difficult to conceive two men with characters less alike than Lee and Jackson; the great quality they shared was a capacity for taking responsibility. Lee was distinctly a lovable person—one of those rare characters under whom it is a real pleasure to work, and who gets the best out of his subordinates. He took his generals into his full confidence and left much to their discretion.

The fact is that there are many roads to success. Different personalities have different methods, but I wish Henderson had written Lee's life as well as Jackson's.

The situation just before and after Jackson had joined hands with Longstreet on the Fredericksburg Heights is full of interest.

When Longstreet arrived at Fredericksburg Lee deliberately placed half his force within two or three miles of Burnside's main body, while Jackson with the other half was still at Winchester—over 100 miles away. It was a very daring move and

few generals would have risked it. It should not be overlooked, however, that Longstreet was well covered by the Rappahannock river; which, although there were a good many fords, was a formidable military obstacle. Note also how carefully Lee always guarded himself from surprise. When he was at Culpeper Court House he protected himself with Cavalry picquets along the line of the Hazel Run some seven miles to his front, and at Fredericksburg he again secured himself from surprise by making use of the river line. It would have been no easy matter to surprise Longstreet, although, if the Federals had been skilfully commanded, by no means impossible.

Lee had not definitely made up his mind to fight at Fredericksburg, when he first sent Longstreet to that place. He wrote to Jackson on November 19—that is to say two days after Longstreet had left Culpeper, that he did not anticipate making a determined stand north of the North Anna; and he still left Jackson absolute discretion as to remaining about Winchester—although, of course, Jackson no longer threatened the Federal line of communications which had been removed to Aquia Creek and Falmouth.

Even as late as November 23, when Lee was at Fredericksburg and he knew Burnside's whole army was in front of him, he still did not send definite orders although he wrote to Jackson to the effect

that he (Lee) thought that Jackson should move across the Blue Ridge to Culpeper. All this is rather curious, and it is hard to agree altogether with Lee's attitude. He appears to have allowed Jackson such a free hand that it can hardly be said that Lee was really commanding; but of course we must remember that Jackson had proved his capacity for an independent command and had Lee's complete confidence.

From Lee's correspondence we can get an insight into his mind, and the different plans he had for delaying the Federal advance. We have seen how he proposed to delay McClellan—by manœuvre rather than by fighting—by threatening his line of supply. The effect of these manœuvres was to induce the Federals to alter their line of supply to Aquia Creek.

Lee evidently had thoughts of dealing with this new situation on much the same lines. His later letters to Jackson suggest that the latter should move to Culpeper and there take up a threatening position on Burnside's right flank—that Rappahannock station should be occupied by advanced troops, and that Stuart and his Cavalry should advance beyond that place and operate energetically, in which case he (Lee) thought Burnside would be afraid to advance.

This plan never came off; but it is worth close study, as in it we find the sort of manœuvre a great Commander had in his mind. The general

idea is much the same as when he divided his forces to meet McClellan's advance. He still proposed to play upon his enemy's fears and apprehensions, rather than depend upon hard fighting. It is a good example of the strategy suitable for a greatly inferior force. The main point to bear in mind is that this sort of strategy, although it may be successful against an irresolute Commander, is hardly likely to lead to success against a resolute opponent. It might succeed against Burnside, but not against such a man as Grant, for instance. It depended for success upon a threat—and a threat only. It was nothing more than a bubble, which only required to be struck at and it would burst. But how many generals do we find who on service cannot screw up their determination sufficiently to strike even at bubbles. There have been many in the past, and no doubt there will be many in the future.

Comparison of the two situations shows that Burnside would not have found a force at Culpeper nearly so serious a menace as McClellan had found Jackson's presence about Winchester.

In the latter case the threat might have been put into execution but not so in the former. Examine the map and it will be seen that the enemy at Culpeper could not possibly do anything against the short stretch of line between Falmouth and Aquia Creek. The threat only became dangerous if Burnside advanced beyond Frede-

ricksburg on to the North Anna, but here Burnside had a solution staring him in the face—the line of supply could be altered at will to Port Royal and White House and thus be made practically safe.<sup>1</sup>

Lee, at first, did not propose to put up a serious fight at Fredericksburg. How could he with only Longstreet's Corps? He says himself that he preferred falling back to the North Anna, and it appears as though he then proposed to frighten Burnside by Jackson's force at Culpeper and thus prevent Burnside's advance. If, however, this failed, he meant to fight on the North Anna and to bring up Jackson's Corps for this battle.

For the Confederates the advantage of fighting on the North Anna as opposed to a fight about Fredericksburg are obvious. In the one case there was the chance of bringing off a really decisive battle, as in case of victory the enemy could be pursued and perhaps cut off before they could fall back to Falmouth. In the latter case pursuit was out of the question and the enemy's line of supply back to Aquia Creek was exceptionally secure.

Jackson was of this opinion and urged his views directly he arrived at Fredericksburg on Nov 30th.

Lee, in a despatch to Richmond written two days after the battle of Fredericksburg, explains his reasons for fighting there; he says his original

<sup>1</sup> Ropes enters fully into this question.



design had been to fight at the North Anna, and adds: "My purpose was changed not from any advantage in this position, but from an unwillingness to open more of our country to depredation than possible, and also with a view to collecting such forage and provisions as could be obtained in the Rappahannock Valley."<sup>1</sup>

So here we see once more that strategy cannot be decided until politics, the popular feeling of the country, and questions of supply have been carefully considered.

After this diversion let us return to Burnside and see how he dealt with the situation which faced him.

It is hardly likely that he can have been over-pleased at the results of his strategy. The enemy's forces were no longer divided, but they were now concentrated and in position behind a formidable river.

A brief description of Lee's position will help us to understand the task in front of Burnside.

A very fair idea of the country can be obtained from the map of Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg.<sup>2</sup> This map is a reduction from the official map (made shortly after the battle) of which General Wotherspoon, the late President of the American War College, very kindly gave me a copy.

<sup>1</sup> See "Battles and Leaders," vol. iii. p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Map No. 4.



The Stafford Heights, on the Federal side of the river, commanded the opposite bank.

On the Confederate side, a ridge, some six miles long, ran from Beck's Island to the Massaponax stream. There was an open plain between the ridge and the river. The plain was about one to two miles in breadth, broken by the Hazel Run and Deep Run, and the smaller ravines running into these two streams, the bridges across which had been destroyed.

The northern end of the ridge was open; but south of the unfinished railway it was wooded, not so steep, and further back from the river.

Marye's Heights were only about half as high as the rest of the ridge.

Lee's Hill and Prospect Hill were prominent features in the southern portion of the ridge.

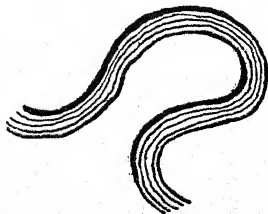
There were numerous roads on the Confederate side, the most important of which were the Plank and Telegraph roads, the former being a continuation of a street in Fredericksburg. Another road ran south from Fredericksburg, between the ridge and the river. A special military road had also been made by the Confederates (see map).

North of the unfinished railway the ridge was covered by a canal, and 400 yards in front of Marye's Heights ran a deep ditch which carried off waste water from the canal. Bridges across the ditch had been removed.

There were two other small features in the ground, which probably attracted little attention before the fight, but which proved of supreme importance, as on the fierce fighting which centred round them hung the fortunes of the day. The first of these was a sunken road at the foot of Marye's Heights; it was simply a sunken road, breast high, and revetted by a stone wall; looked at from the Federal side there was practically nothing to be seen, as the wall was almost level with the ground. There was a clear field of fire from the road to the ditch, but just in front of the latter the ground fell three or four feet and gave a little cover. The second feature was a little tongue of wood which jutted out across the Richmond Railway. (See Map.)

The river above Falmouth ran through a wooded country, and there were many fords—notably Banks', United States, Ely, and Germanna.

Below Falmouth the two most possible crossing places appear to have been Skinker's Neck and Port Royal. Notice the curious bend in the river at Skinker's Neck; thus:—



Books on strategy tell us that a bend of a river like this is a favourable place to force a passage, but at the same time take note that although the actual passage may perhaps be forced, further progress may be barred by the narrow neck of land beyond.

It was a position much like this which, later on in the war, so effectively held up General Butler at Bermuda Hundred, when Grant very aptly described Butler's force as being "bottled." I do not propose to enter into the details of the actual fighting, as the tactics and weapons of those days are so different from those of the present. I will only touch on some of the principal incidents, from which something applicable to present-day warfare may be learnt.

First of all, we are brought up to believe that it is a dangerous matter to fight with a river behind one. This may be so under certain circumstances, but by no means always. In this particular case, the actual passage of the river did not present any real difficulty, as the Stafford Heights afforded splendid Artillery positions which dominated the plain; thus not only covering a crossing but, of course, equally well covering a retirement across the river. The ridge beyond, upon which the Confederate position rested, was the real obstacle. It was a mile to two miles back from the river, closer to the north, and trending further back towards the south.

We must not forget that the armaments of those days had a comparatively short range; the river was altogether beyond rifle-shot of the ridge, and it was an extreme range even for artillery. Under modern conditions the situation would be altogether different.

The Stafford Heights allowed the Federals to give ample Artillery support for the passage of the river, but they were far too distant to support an attack on the ridge beyond. This is an important point to notice.

Again, take note that the river protected the Federal flanks, rear, and line of communications in case the assault on the ridge failed, thus preventing defeat being turned into disaster.

The situation was somewhat similar at the battle of Sadowa, where the Austrians fought with a river immediately behind them. The river did not prevent the Austrian retirement from the battlefield, although undoubtedly it might have if Benedek had not taken the precaution to throw some extra bridges, and his rearguard had not put up a strong resistance.

But that there are dangers in fighting with one's back to a river is obvious, as was exemplified at the battle of Sobraon. In this case the Sikhs were cruelly punished as they attempted to retire across the river; the reason being that the Sikhs received no Artillery support, and had

made no extra bridges, so that their troops were jammed up in great confusion.

Burnside was not in too pleasant a position. In front of him was the enemy, strongly posted, and behind him was the country and Government urging him strongly to advance. He either had to fight or manœuvre Lee out of his position.

A turning movement up-stream does not appear to have been seriously considered, although the country was not unfavourable to such a movement, as the river was narrower—and there were many fords—and owing to the woods a surprise might have been effected—*vide* the Battle of Chancellorsville.

At first, Burnside appears to have favoured a move by Skinker's Neck and Port Royal, which had certain advantages, as the base could have been changed quite easily, and an advance from that direction would have struck at Lee's flank and rear and his communications with Richmond. Lee evidently anticipated an attempt being made in that direction.

Union gunboats were up the river at Port Royal; but on the 30th Lee sent a force there with several batteries, and the gunboats were driven back. The Confederates left large forces at both Port Royal and Skinker's Neck, in observation, and fortified both places.

The Federals had balloons, and received many

reports from them; but as we found in South Africa, the observers in balloons were apt to exaggerate the strength of the enemy.

As far as I can understand, the situation must have presented itself to Burnside as follows:—

At Port Royal.—Large hostile forces, say 10,000 to 20,000 men, entrenched.

At Skinker's Neck.—Ditto.<sup>1</sup>

From Massaponax River up to Beck's Island.

The enemy were in great strength along the ridge.

There were Cavalry guarding the fords up the river.

From Beck's Island to Port Royal is some eighteen miles as the crow flies.

The weather was very cold, there was snow on the ground and a hard frost.

The Army spent its time in drills and reviews; in the spare intervals the men looked across the river at Lee's position, and the more they looked the less they liked it. We read that there was a good deal of grumbling and much gloomy talk. The officers and men thoroughly realised that every day spent in inaction meant a more difficult task for them; Burnside never had the

<sup>1</sup> Henderson says: "He (Burnside) appears to have believed that Lee, alarmed by his demonstrations near Port Royal, had posted half his Army in that neighbourhood."—"Stonewall Jackson," vol. ii. p. 307.

confidence of the Army, and his slowness increased their distrust of him. From all accounts the senior officers, except that fine old fighter Sumner, were none too loyal.

A few days after his arrival at Falmouth, Burnside summoned a Conference and said he had selected Skinker's Neck as the crossing-place. His decision was not received with enthusiasm. When the Conference broke up Burnside told his Generals to be ready to carry out this plan and that orders would follow.

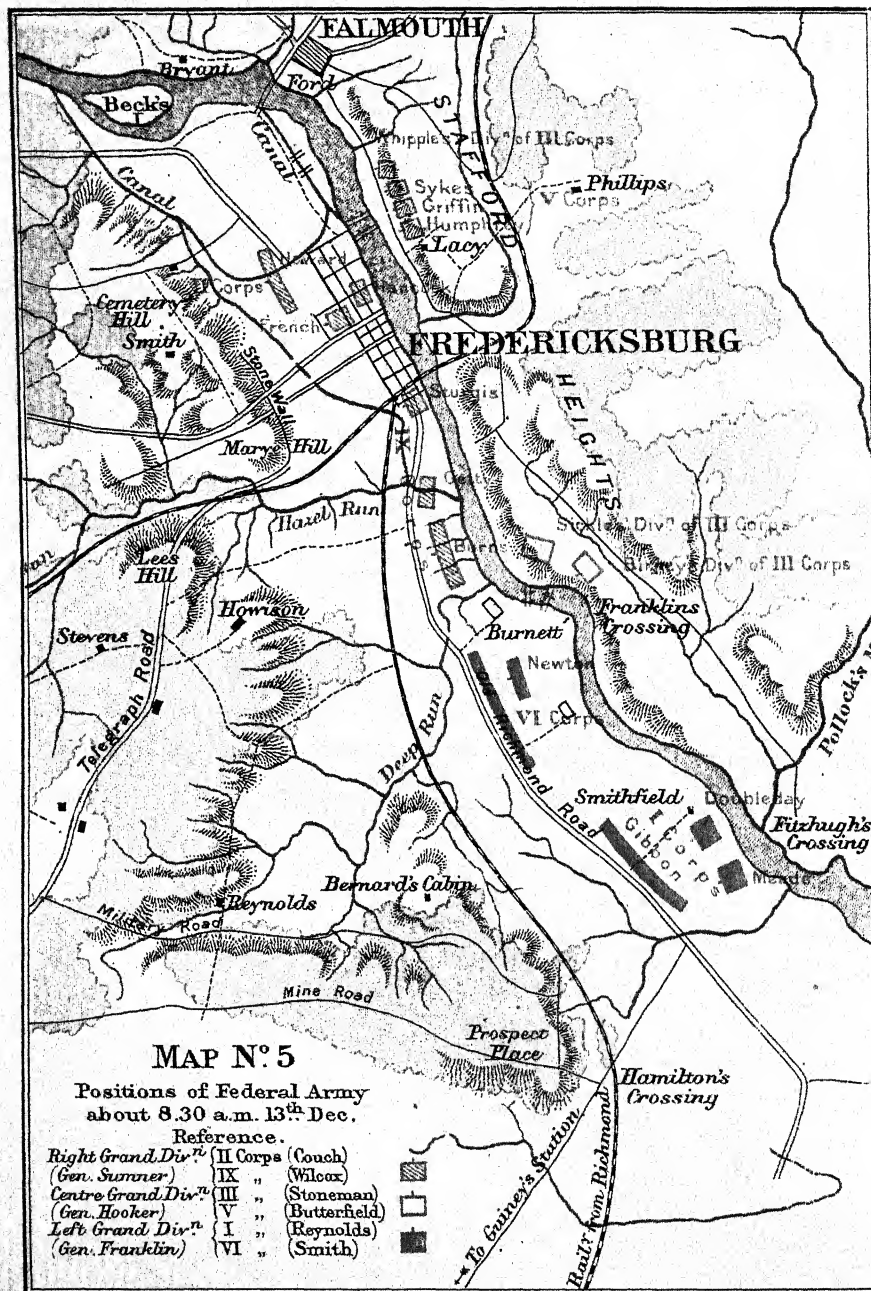
If this had been an effort at deceiving the enemy and troops had moved so as to give colour to the feint, there would have been something to be said for it.

But a few days later Burnside changed his mind and selected Fredericksburg. Smith tells us in "Battles and Leaders" that Burnside divulged his plan to him, saying that he was impressed with the value of the Stafford Heights as an Artillery position and adding: "Oh! I know where Lee's forces are, and I expect to surprise him. I expect to cross the river and occupy the hills before Lee can bring anything serious to meet me." Smith says his answer was: "If you are sure of that, there is no more to be said on the matter." Which puts the case very fairly.

So the time passed till December 9—nineteen whole days. On that, or the previous day, Burnside explained his plans. Sumner's Grand







Division was to cross by three pontoon bridges opposite Fredericksburg; Franklin's Grand Division was to cross by two pontoon bridges just below the mouth of Deep Run; while Hooker's Grand Division was to remain in reserve on the left bank.

There was no attempt made at a feint: everything was to be made easy for Lee. If there is one operation in war which calls for feints and some effort at deception, it is the passage of a river.

Burnside's plan depended for success upon rapidity of execution. Seldom has a movement been carried out more leisurely. Couch tells us that Sumner called a conference of his officers, at which much free talk took place, and when an American says "free talk" he probably means a good deal; the plan was not at all appreciated. Burnside having heard of this, collected the Generals at Lacy House on the 10th and expressed *his* opinion. Such incidents indicate the unhealthy atmosphere which pervaded the Federal Army. It always tells against the morale of an Army when this critical spirit makes its appearance, and there is no disguising the fact that the British Army has been as liable as any other to the disease. At the same time, the fault frequently lies at the door of the C.-in-C., either because he has not obtained the confidence of his troops, or because he is lacking in personality.

According to Burnside's plan Sumner's and Franklin's "Grand Divisions" were to assemble during the night of 10th-11th, and cross by the pontoon bridges which were to be finished by daylight on the 11th.

There was a dense fog, practically every morning up to about 10 o'clock.

The troops were ready to cross at daylight, but there was an unforeseen difficulty about the bridge-building. The enemy held the far bank at both crossing-places, *i.e.* in the town of Fredericksburg opposite Sumner, and along the more open banks opposite Franklin.

Franklin by bringing his guns into action was able to drive off the enemy, but the bridges were not finished till 1 p.m. The Grand Division then crossed. One regiment nearly broke the bridge, as the band commenced playing as the troops were moving over it. In the evening an order came for Franklin to recross, leaving one Brigade to hold a bridge head. The reason for this being that Sumner had met with considerable opposition and his passage over the river had been even slower than Franklin's.

What had happened was this: Sumner's engineers started building their bridge in the dark, and when they were about half way across the enemy opened an accurate rifle fire upon the bridge builders from the houses and cellars in the town. This stopped all work; many gallant

efforts were made, but the enemy were well sheltered and their fire altogether too accurate.

Eventually the heavy guns on the Stafford Heights opened fire for one hour; each gun fired 50 rounds. The bombardment seems to have impressed all onlookers, but although it kept down the heads of the enemy's riflemen, it by no means drove them out of the town. Eventually, at 3 p.m., four regiments volunteered to cross in pontoons a little above the town; this was effected with little loss, and considerable street fighting took place in the town. While this was going on the Engineers were able to finish the bridges and Sumner's troops gained possession of the town a little before dusk.

Thus all chance of surprise had vanished. Possibly, what had been done might have been turned into a feint and the army moved to Skinker's Neck or Port Royal, but Burnside never entertained such an idea.

So the position at dusk on the evening of the 11th panned out to this:

The bridges had been laid. Of Sumner's "Grand Division"—one division (Howard) of the II Corps occupied the north end of the town, while one brigade of the IX Corps occupied the south end of the town. The remainder of the Grand Division were still on the left bank.

Franklin's "Grand Division," as we have seen,

all recrossed except one brigade left as a guard to the bridge head.

The result of the day's work was most unsatisfactory to say the least of it.

Is there anything to be learnt from this?

Without a doubt, it shows us the value of advanced posts under certain conditions. The delay caused by the fighting had absolutely destroyed all chance of surprise. The Confederates had made no attempt to reinforce their advanced troops—they had risked very little, but, on the other hand, they had gained time and inflicted considerable losses on the Federals. Let us bear this in mind; one of these days the knowledge may be of value. Note that the troops holding the advanced posts were able to withdraw without being destroyed, the river protecting their flanks assisted them in this, and in the case of Fredericksburg the retirement was to a great extent covered by the darkness. Moreover, the Confederates did not make the mistake of putting too many troops in the advanced posts, a matter which always requires careful consideration.

As far as can be ascertained Burnside had not anticipated opposition on the river bank. The Confederates had been careful to keep their men concealed and all the work had been done at night.

Burnside decided to persist with his plan and on the 12th Sumner and Franklin crossed over to

the right bank. There was apparently a good deal of looting in Fredericksburg, as Couch mentions that an enormous pile of booty was collected by the provost guards at the bridges.

Practically no fighting took place during the day; by evening the position was as follows:—

*Sumner's "Grand Division"* :—

II Corps (Couch) occupied the upper half of the town.

IX Corps (Willcox) occupied the lower half of the town.

The troops bivouacked in the town and streets; no fires were allowed.

*Franklin's "Grand Division"* was in position about three-quarters of a mile in front of the bridges, where a line of battle was established with:—

VI Corps (Smith) with its right across Deep Run, an impassable obstacle, which had to be bridged in order to establish communication between Franklin's and Sumner's Commands.

I Corps (Reynolds) was curved back with its left resting on the river.

Smith's description of the position and the feelings of the men in Franklin's "Grand Division" is somewhat interesting. He says,<sup>1</sup> "Here

<sup>1</sup> "Battles and Leaders," vol. iii. p. 132.



were two Corps with an impassable stream on their right, a formidable range of hills occupied by the enemy covering almost the entire front, and at their back a river with two frail bridges connecting its shores. It takes soldiers who do not believe that war is an art to be perfectly at their ease under these circumstances."

If this is an accurate description of the state of mind of the men in Franklin's Command, it must have been a gloomy bivouac that night. The situation was not really as depressing as Smith makes out, as although the prospect of success was certainly remote, owing to Burnside's slowness; still the Artillery on Stafford Heights would have prevented the Federals being driven into the river; short of a panic the only chance of that was a night attack.

If the rank and file were entering into the battle in poor spirits, Franklin and his Generals passed the night in still more dismal forebodings.

Burnside had visited Franklin's Command about 5 p.m.; he galloped along the line of battle; but we do not hear that his presence excited any enthusiasm. Franklin proposed massing the bulk of his command on his extreme left and turning Lee's right at all costs, and to enable him to do this, he urged that Hooker should send two of his Divisions from the General Reserve to relieve the VI Corps at dusk. To this apparently Burn-

side agreed and said definite orders would shortly be issued.

Franklin and his Generals sat there all through the night, waiting for orders—none came. They discussed the situation and agreed that all chance of surprise had gone; they were most despondent and the lack of orders increased their uneasiness. At 3 a.m. Franklin could stand the uncertainty no longer and sent his A.D.C. for orders. It requires no very vivid imagination to picture the scene—the Generals anxiously awaiting the return of the A.D.C.; their relief on his approach, at the thought that with promptness there would still, perhaps, be time to set the troops in motion before daylight. What must have been their feelings when, instead of instructions, they received a message that “orders would be sent presently!”

Eventually, at 7.45 a.m. on December 13, the orders arrived (see Map No. 5). It was, of course, daylight, but there was, as usual, a thick morning fog. The order ran:

“Keep your whole command in position for rapid movement down the old Richmond Road, and you will send out at once a Division, at least, to pass below Smithfield to seize if possible the heights near Captain Hamilton’s on this side of the Massaponax, taking care to keep it well supported, and its line of retreat open. He (Burnside) has ordered another column of a

Division or more to be moved from General Sumner's Command up the Plank Road to its intersection with the Telegraph Road, where they [*sic*] will divide, with a view to seizing the heights on both of these roads. Holding these heights, with the heights near Hamilton's crossing, will, he hopes, compel the enemy to evacuate the whole ridge between these points."

Anxiously as Franklin must have been awaiting his instructions, it can hardly have been with any sense of relief that he read them when they did arrive.

There was no mention of Hooker's two Divisions who were expected to relieve Smith's Corps (VI), nor was there any sign of them. This meant that at any rate the whole of the VI Corps would not be available for the attack.

Then again, what did Burnside mean exactly? He said the *whole* Command was to be ready to move down the Richmond Road—evidently this move was to be the decisive effort.

But what did he mean by saying that one Division at least was to be sent to seize the heights by Hamilton's Crossing? These heights would require the whole force to seize them. Yet Burnside apparently proposed to send one Division forward while the remainder of the troops looked on.

Burnside's orders were contradictory and badly expressed. He did not explain what it was he

wanted done and leave the method of execution to Franklin. On the contrary, he left his intentions altogether vague and issued pettifogging orders as to the execution.

It can scarcely have increased Franklin's confidence when he saw the orders that had been given to Sumner. Here, again, Burnside proposed to send one Division, or more, to seize the heights, while the remainder of Sumner's Command was to look on: piecemeal attacks with a vengeance. How Burnside could have imagined that unsupported and isolated efforts by a small proportion of his force would drive the enemy from their position almost passes human comprehension. Yet these things happen in war.

We must now leave Franklin and see whether Sumner's "Grand Division" was in a better pass. It had bivouacked in the streets of Fredericksburg, as on the previous night, without fires; it was freezing.

Late in the evening Couch, who commanded Sumner's II Corps, tells us that orders were received to be ready to cross the Hazel Run, which meant joining hands with Franklin, whose right was across Deep Run. There was some anxiety as regards building the necessary bridges; but Burnside again changed his mind and early in the morning Couch received an order from Sumner to be ready to assault to the front.

Sumner was still on the left bank, where apparently he remained all through the battle. This seems a curious arrangement, and Couch explains it by saying that it was a special arrangement made by Burnside owing to Sumner's supposed rashness!

Words rather fail, when we find a Commander forbidden to remain with his own troops. How could Burnside possibly expect to handle his Army when he did things like this. But I believe that Couch's statement is wrong. Burnside in his orders told Sumner to remain north of the river until he (Burnside) had seen him. The probabilities are that Burnside kept Sumner with him to ask his advice during the battle. But whatever the reason, the fact remains that Sumner was not allowed to take command of his Grand Division, although it was being cut to pieces under his eyes.

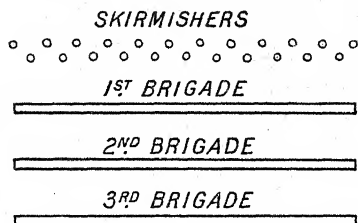
About 7 a.m. Sumner received his instructions from Burnside: he was directed to extend his left to Deep Run, connecting with Franklin, his right as far as his judgment might dictate. He was also instructed to push a column of a Division or more along the Plank and Telegraph Roads with a view to seizing the height west of the town.

Sumner passed on these orders to his two Corps Commanders, Couch and Wilcox, who received them about 8.15 a.m.

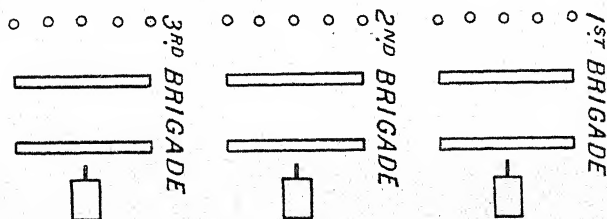
Wilcox (IX) was to connect with Franklin. Couch (II) was to extend sufficiently to his right to guard the upper part of the town. He was to form a column of one Division to seize the heights; the column to be in three lines covered by a heavy line of skirmishers. Another Division was to be held in readiness to support this movement, and the advance was not to commence until orders were received.

On receipt of this order, French's Division (II Corps) formed in three lines, each of one Brigade with 200 yards between the lines. Hancock's Division was to follow in the same order.

It is worth noticing the formations of these Divisions, *i.e.* Brigades in line, one Brigade behind another thus :



In these days the Brigades would of course be in depth thus :



But the tactics in those days were somewhat different. The real meaning of fire superiority was not understood. The skirmishers were expected to cover the advance of what was called "the line of battle," which was usually a solid line two deep. The skirmishers went on as far as they could and then up came the line of battle which received and gave its fire, and then the charge either took place or not, according to the state of the troops. In fact we constantly find Brigades and Divisions being ordered to the "charge" in much the same way as we speak now of ordering a Brigade or Division to attack.

It is necessary to realise this when we are studying the fights in the American Civil War.

It was only when the effect of modern armaments obliged troops to extend more and more, owing to the increased volume of fire and the greatly increased range of effective fire, that it was gradually realised that large units could not attack in one long line. The French attempted to adhere to the old system in the beginning of the '70 War, consequently commanders of large formations found it impossible to make their presence felt, not to mention that any manœuvring or change of direction became almost impossible under such conditions. Thus by degrees our modern tactics were evolved, but only after much bitter experience.



We have now explained the situation as regards Franklin and Sumner. There only remains Hooker's Grand Division.

Hooker received his orders about 7.30 a.m. He was directed to place Butterfield's Corps (V) and one Division (Whipple) of III Corps in position ready to cross the upper bridges in support of Sumner. The remaining two Divisions of III Corps (Stoneman) to be ready to cross the lower bridges in support of Franklin.

The movements above outlined, ushered in the battle. Map No. 5 shows the positions of Burnside's Army, and should make the situation fairly clear.

## CHAPTER IV

As previously explained, Burnside proposed to commence his attack upon Lee's position by two separate efforts, some three miles apart. His Army consisted of 122,000 men, but his attack was to be made by some 12,000 to 15,000 men only. It is impossible to justify his action, as he defied all principles of war, and lost sight of all common sense.

It is possible that he decided upon this plan to avoid risking more until the situation had become clearer: this is a natural tendency and one which soldiers have to be on their guard against. It nearly always ends in defeat in detail, as one of two things almost invariably happens: either the attack fails to make any impression at all and there is a bloody repulse, or the attack gains some temporary advantage and then is repulsed equally bloodily because there is no support at hand.

As we shall see, Sumner's attack never got home, and Franklin's attack failed owing to lack of support.

It is just as well to understand this thoroughly, and to realise that by committing only a small proportion of our troops we are far from taking a safe course: on the contrary, such action is extremely dangerous and will probably lead to defeat.

It must not, however, be thought from the foregoing that there is any intention of advocating that a Commander should not keep a reserve in his own hand—far from it; but we must harden our hearts and launch our attacks in the greatest strength possible, only keeping sufficient reserve in hand to meet unforeseen emergencies. How big this reserve should be must altogether depend upon circumstances, not least of which will be the accuracy of our information.

Moreover, we must not forget that under modern conditions an attack is made in great depth, which means that an attacking force has a comparatively small proportion engaged in the firing line, the remainder forming local reserves and supports. This means that the greater the depth of the attack, the smaller need be our reserve; by reserve is meant the general reserve acting directly under the Commander-in-Chief.

If an attack is made with only two or three men a yard, it means that the attacking force may fail to make good its attack, and may even be driven back and defeated, unless there is some force available as a reserve. If we attack with

say five or six men a yard, it is obvious that the chance of success is greater and the risk of being driven back is less. Consequently there is, then, no necessity for such a large general reserve.

What we generally find is this: The general reserve will be required to deal with some unforeseen activity on one or both flanks. The front can, to a great extent, look after itself, always provided we make our attack in sufficient depth. But with the flanks it is different. In order to meet a flank attack we must either withdraw troops from the front attack (which is never an easy thing to do, and at times is quite impossible) or we must bring up fresh troops.

Therefore, as a general principle it is advisable to keep a reserve on the flanks. Not only is this usually so, as regards meeting a hostile attack, for the reasons which have just been given, but it also applies to an attack on our part. For it stands to reason that it is difficult to launch an attack through our own firing lines; the fresh troops become mixed with the original attacking line, and have to face the fire which has checked the original advance (a very real difficulty this). Moreover, we must remember that the enemy's most vulnerable spot is usually his flanks, and, therefore, it is almost always sound to try and envelop one or both of them, and drive home the attack by stern and relentless pressure. Also, if we are dealing with a large Army, covering a

front of 20-30-40 miles, or more, a reserve behind the centre has to do a day's march before it can reach the flanks.

I am afraid this is rather a digression from the story; but I frankly acknowledge that my intention is not so much to follow out this battle in detail, as to take certain incidents and seek the lessons that may be drawn from them.

Now as regards the two points of attack being three miles apart. In those days, owing to the comparatively short range of the weapons, Burnside's efforts were beyond supporting distance of one another. It might almost be said that there were two distinct battles. There was hardly a shot fired in the space between Hazel Run and Deep Run; the result of this was that Longstreet was able to withdraw one of his Divisions (Pickett) from this front and bring it up in support of the troops holding the stone wall at the foot of Marye's Heights.

At the best, a direct attack on the Fredericksburg Heights offered but small chance of success—it would have been better to have crossed elsewhere; but, having decided to attack, it would have been wiser if the bulk of the force had been concentrated against one or other of the enemy's flanks.

The northern flank was well guarded by the river, and its front protected by the canal and deep dyke, both serious obstacles. Also, it was

almost impossible to bring guns into action on the right bank ; the only available position was on the Stafford Heights on the left bank, which would have been so far back as to be almost beyond the range of the Artillery of that time. At the same time General Alexander, who knew the ground well, does not agree with this. He says : " The most obvious and the proper attack for the Federal right, was one turning the Confederate left along the very edge of the river above Falmouth, supported by Artillery from the north bank which could enfilade and take in reverse the Confederate left flank." From a study of the map, there seems to be much common sense in this, especially as regards the Artillery support, but the Infantry could hardly have delivered this attack if they started from Fredericksburg ; they would have had to cross above Falmouth.

Lee's right flank, however, was not so strong, and a defeat there would have seriously threatened his communications.

Burnside would have been better advised if he had made a feint with one Corps opposite Fredericksburg while, with the remainder of his Army, he had concentrated against Lee's extreme right. Even as late as the night of the 12th-13th there appears to have been no reason why Hooker's "Grand Division" should not have crossed the river before daylight ; if this had been done and a combined attack made by the whole Army (less

the Corps left at Fredericksburg), there would have been quite a reasonable chance of success.

The story of the fight can be outlined as follows :—

*At 9 a.m.* Franklin sent forward Meade's Division (I Corps) to seize the heights by Hamilton's Crossing.

*At 9.30 a.m.* Jackson's Artillery opened fire and checked Meade's advance. At the same time the Confederate Cavalry and a battery of Horse Artillery seriously threatened Meade's left flank.

The Artillery fight continued till about 11 a.m., when Meade advanced again, but as his troops neared the wood they came under a sudden burst of Infantry fire and were obliged to fall back to the Richmond Road.

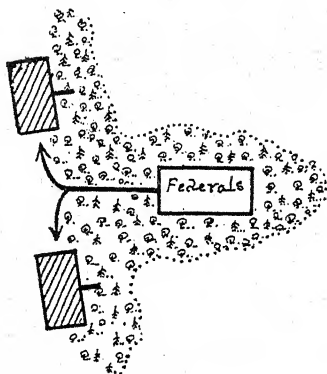
A regular Artillery duel then took place, Franklin bringing up most of his guns and also moving forward the two remaining divisions of I Corps to support Meade. Gibbon's Division came up on Meade's right, while Doubleday's Division was placed to the left rear of Meade, facing nearly south on account of the threatening attitude of the Confederate Cavalry and two guns, the latter most gallantly handled by young Pelham.

*By 1 p.m.* Franklin's Artillery had practically silenced the hostile guns, and Meade and Gibbon advanced to the assault, directing their attack on



the tongue of wood which projected beyond the railway. (See Map.)

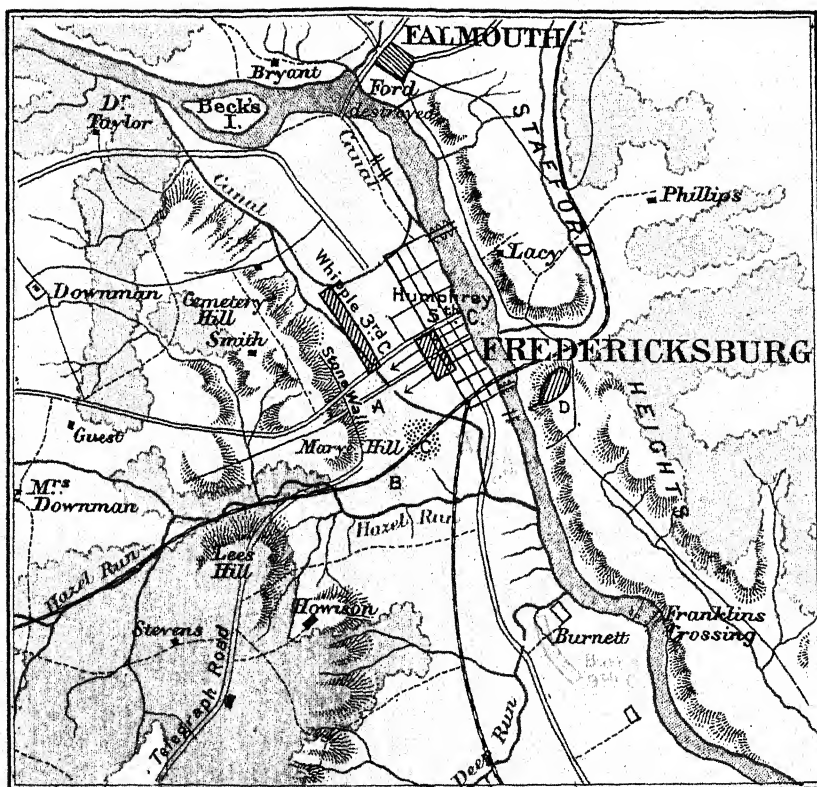
Luckily for the Federals Jackson had omitted to hold this wood, as it and a marsh behind it were apparently considered impassable. Thus the Federal Infantry found themselves sheltered from fire as they approached the tongue of wood, and large bodies were able to penetrate through it. After proceeding a short distance they came upon the flanks of two Confederate brigades which were posted one on each side of the tongue of wood, thus :—



The Confederates were badly surprised and driven back with great loss.

If only supports had been at hand, this success might have been followed up and turned into victory. But, as so often happened with the Federals, supports were lacking, although there were plenty of troops available. Of Franklin's own "Grand Division" there were two Divisions





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## MAP N° 6.

Situation about 4 p.m. showing Sumner and Hooker's Command.

Sumner's troops in Red

Hooker's " " Black

- A. Confused mass of men, remnants of French's Div<sup>n</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Corps), who charged about midday.
- Hancock's Div<sup>n</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Corps), who charged after French.
- Howard's Div<sup>n</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Corps), who charged shortly after Hancock.
- B. Confused mass of men remnants of Sturgis Div<sup>n</sup> (9<sup>th</sup> Corps), who charged about the same time, or a little later than Howard.
- C. Griffen's Div<sup>n</sup> (5<sup>th</sup> Corps), who charged after Sturgis.
- D. Sykes (5<sup>th</sup> Corps) just about to cross the bridge.

Humphrey's Div<sup>n</sup> (5<sup>th</sup> Corps) is shown in the act of charging, the arrow lines showing direction.

Gatty's Div<sup>n</sup> (9<sup>th</sup> Corps) charged about 4.30.

looking on, *i.e.* Doubleday (I Corps) and Newton (VI Corps), and two other Divisions (Birney's and Sickles', both of the III Corps) were also available.

The latter had been in the morning, as will be remembered, on the left bank, near the pontoon bridges, and had by this time crossed the river.

These four Divisions looked on while Meade and Gibbon fought desperately in the woods just in front of them, or rather it should be said Franklin looked on, as we may take it that the men were only too anxious to receive the order to advance to the support of their comrades.

The struggle only lasted about half-an-hour or so, and then fugitives began streaming back. The inevitable had happened, Jackson had brought up fresh troops, and by a vigorous counter-attack utterly routed the Federals.

From all accounts, the fighting was very severe, and the issue hung for some time in the balance.

Two Confederate Brigades rashly followed up the retreating Federals, but were driven back as soon as they came under the fire of the troops behind.

The time was then about 2.30 p.m.

Since mid-day, Franklin and his troops had heard the battle raging in front of Sumner, three miles away. It must have been obvious that there, also, no progress had been made: the enemy were still in possession of the heights.

Burnside having seen the repulse of the two

Confederate Brigades which had pursued Meade's and Gibbon's men out of the wood, and seeing that Sumner's attack was making no impression, sent an order to Franklin "to renew the attack with his whole force."<sup>1</sup> This order was not obeyed; some accounts say the order arrived too late—it was dark shortly after 4 p.m. Other accounts say that Franklin ignored the order as he had lost all confidence in Burnside.

There was practically no more fighting on this front for the rest of the day. It is more than doubtful if Jackson would have succeeded, even if he had made a counter-attack in full strength. Franklin had eight Divisions south of the Hazel Run, of which two only had been heavily engaged; moreover, the Artillery on the left bank of the river would have been able to actively co-operate in resisting a Confederate advance.

We must now turn to the battle on the right, which was even more disastrous to the Federals (see Maps Nos. 5 and 6).

Burnside's original idea had been to hold back Sumner's advance until Franklin had made good the heights on the left. But, as we have seen, Franklin's advance was much delayed, and by 11 o'clock there was no immediate prospect of its being successful. Burnside became impatient; he says, "Feeling the importance of haste, I now directed General Sumner to commence his attack."

<sup>1</sup> Authority: Steele's "American Campaigns," p. 300.

Since 10 a.m. Couch (II Corps) had been ready to advance, French's Division leading, with Hancock's Division immediately behind in support; while on the right Howard's Division was relieved by Whipple's of the III Corps, sent over the river by Hooker.

Hooker also sent over Griffin's Division of the V Corps to support Sturgis, who commanded the right Division of the IX Corps, and was, consequently, on the immediate left of Couch.

This was approximately the state of affairs when Couch received the order to advance.

A little after 12 o'clock, the Artillery fire of Franklin's fight being plainly audible, the troops moved forward. Directly they debouched out of the town they came under a heavy Artillery fire; they had to cross the dyke by two broken-down bridges and deploy for attack in the little bit of sheltered ground just beyond, which was only some 400 to 500 yards from the stone wall.

As soon as the advance commenced, French was met by a terrific fire; the men could not face it for long, and the attack simply crumbled away.

Hancock's Division then advanced; it met with the same fate. Howard then attacked, but it was all to no purpose.

The remnants of Couch's Divisions clung tenaciously to the ground they had gained, but it was mostly a case of taking such cover as was afforded by a few brick houses. It was the days

of smoke powder, and as the smoke lay thick on the ground very little could be seen. Couch tells us that the plain seemed to be alive with men, some lying down, others running about, while a steady stream of wounded men was returning to the town.

Sturgis' Division of the IX Corps then charged at about 1 p.m., but with the same result.

It must now have been about 2 p.m. Hooker had arrived in Fredericksburg with orders to press the attack. Further efforts were made.

Humphrey's Division of V Corps charged about 4 p.m., and made a particularly gallant attempt.<sup>1</sup>

Then Getty's Division put in a Brigade, with the same result. This ended the fighting.

The troops were drawn back into the town and passed the night there, the dead and wounded being left where they had fallen. It was bitterly cold.

Sykes' Division of the V Corps took over the outposts at about 11 at night.

It had been a disastrous day for the Federals; their losses totalled up to 12,653—about 9½ per cent. of their whole force. But we must remember that Franklin had only employed two Divisions out of eight, and Sykes' Division on the right had not been engaged either. So that

<sup>1</sup> It was during this charge that a well-known incident took place, the Irish troops with Humphrey being opposed by an Irish Confederate Brigade. Needless to say, as far as gallantry was concerned, the Irishmen on both sides upheld their national traditions.



the percentage of loss amongst the troops actually engaged was exceedingly heavy—say about 18 or 19 per cent. As many as 6,300 men fell at the foot of Marye's Heights.

What have we to learn from this day's work? In actual tactics probably next to nothing, but there is much to be learnt about higher leading on a battlefield.

Let us first of all consider Sumner's attack on the right.

The outstanding feature here appears to be the series of isolated attacks; one way and another, it may be said that there were six quite distinct efforts—namely, by French, Hancock, Howard, Sturgis, Humphrey, and Getty. It was not one big consolidated blow, it was a piecemeal business.

There is no getting away from the fact that it would have been almost impossible to have made one big effort. The ground was against this; the dyke and canal (30 feet broad and 6 feet deep) cramped the movement of the troops; the whole front of the attack only extended for three-quarters of a mile at the outside. It was not possible to work round the enemy's northern flank, and the Hazel Run made it difficult to extend the attack further southwards.

Also take note of the lack of Artillery support; the main force of the Artillery remained on the left bank, on the Stafford Heights. Here it was well placed to cover the actual passage of the

river, or to cover a retirement back across the river ; but it could do very little else ; it could not give close Artillery support to the real attack against the ridge. The result we know.

The Federals certainly took some 100 guns across the river with Sumner, but it was found impossible to bring them into action, only 7 batteries being engaged.

We must remember, also, that smoke almost blotted out a battlefield in those days, consequently it must have been next to impossible for the gunners any distance in the rear to see what was going on near the Infantry firing line.

This must especially have been the case when the hostile Infantry became closely engaged, as happened along the stone wall at the foot of Marye's Heights.

The Stone Wall is, of course, now famous in history. The position was of great strength because :

- (1) Its flanks were well secured ;
- (2) It was so placed that the Confederates were able to support it by their Artillery fire from the ridge behind ;
- (3) It was well concealed from the view of the attacking Infantry ;
- (4) It was not exposed to the Federal guns.

In such advantages lies the strength of a position. Bear these points in mind, for the officer whose study of war and quickness of eye enable him to take for his men the fullest advantage of any

favourable features the ground offers, has gone far on the road to successful command.

To emphasise this lesson, compare the situation at Fredericksburg with that at Woerth. At Woerth the French Infantry *on the right and centre* were exposed to the full force of the German Artillery, and the French Artillery were unable to co-operate with their own Infantry, consequently the German attack succeeded. On the French *left*, on the other hand, we find that their Infantry were sheltered from hostile Artillery, and their own Artillery were able to co-operate. What was the result? The Germans could make absolutely no impression until the French Infantry were turned, owing to their line being driven back elsewhere. Surely if we think over such situations there is something to be learnt. All history goes to prove that a soldier can remember few more important principles than the necessity for sheltering Infantry from hostile Artillery fire. How it is done is immaterial. Whether we do it by making full use of the cover afforded by the ground, or whether we can make sure of overpowering the enemy's guns by our own fire (no easy matter in these days of smokeless powder and indirect fire), must depend upon circumstances. But, whatever the circumstances may be, never lose sight of the principle.

There is another point about this stone wall which gives us something to think about. It was

well down the hill, practically in the plain below, yet in South Africa we were often inclined to think that the Boers had invented a new form of tactics when they came off the high ground and posted their riflemen in well-concealed positions at the foot of the hills. The Boers were only using their common sense, they were instinctively applying the lessons which any intelligent student of war could have found out for himself.

War is greatly a matter of common sense; our Field Service Regulations and Training Manuals are nothing but an attempt to make us look at war from a practical commonsense point of view.

Now, although this stone wall was exceptionally well situated for defence, it suffered from the ordinary disadvantages of a position in front of rising ground. That is to say, it was difficult to reinforce the troops down below and it would have been difficult to withdraw the troops up the hill. Once troops have been placed down below like this, it will usually be a case of fighting it out unsupported. In this particular case, the Confederates were able to send reinforcements down the hill, although we read they suffered heavily in doing so.<sup>1</sup> Say, however, the Federal Artillery had been able to pull its weight, or that the slope of the hill had been under rifle or maxim fire from troops in support—what would have

<sup>1</sup> The 3rd and 7th Carolinas lost about 200 men when they were coming down the slope.

happened then? Would the Confederates have been able to support Cobb's gallant men at the stone wall? It is very doubtful.

As a matter of fact the question of withdrawing from the stone wall never arose; but if it had, it would have been a serious matter for the Confederates. McLaws, who was in command of this section, tells us in "Battles and Leaders" (vol. iii., p. 90), that he was considerably alarmed that the troops to his immediate north might be withdrawn, which would have left his men at the stone wall at the mercy of the Federals. He urged Longstreet to provide for the protection of the men in the sunken road, which was accordingly arranged.

To summarise the above: Troops in a defensive position should be sheltered from hostile Artillery fire; they should be well supported by their own Artillery; they should be concealed from view so that the enemy may be surprised. At the same time if we put Infantry down the forward slope of a hill we must realise that they will probably have to fight to a finish down below, as it will be very difficult to send reinforcements down to them, and even more difficult to withdraw once the fighting has come to close quarters.

We will now consider Franklin's operations and try to extract some lessons from them.

First of all, we must note that out of Franklin's whole force of eight divisions only two were

launched to the attack. Burnside's faulty order to Franklin was primarily responsible for this. When we recall many of our fights in South Africa, notably our Tugela attacks, history seems to have repeated itself; the same faults were committed with similar results. Let us hope we have learnt our lesson.

Franklin was more fortunate than Sumner as regards his Artillery. He was able to bring about 116 guns across the river, and the ground enabled him to bring most of them into action.

As we know, Meade was driven back by the enemy's guns which suddenly opened fire on his Infantry, and it was only after an Artillery engagement of about three hours that he was able to continue his advance. The chances are that but for this Artillery support Meade and Gibbon would never have been able to penetrate the wood, their men would have met the same fate as Sumner's on the right.

We read that Jackson's Infantry did not suffer to any great extent from the Federal Artillery; they were well concealed both by the woods and railway. Attention has already been called to the tongue of wood which jutted out from Jackson's line. The Confederates, apparently, considered it impassable, as it was very thick, and there was a swamp at the back of it, which accounted for its being left unoccupied. This went near to being a fatal error, and it is a lesson to remember that we



should be extremely cautious about saying any bit of country is impassable.

We all remember the story of Quebec ; while much the same error was committed at Majuba, and again, as we shall see, at Chancellorsville.

It will be remembered that when Meade advanced to the attack, he found his left threatened by Cavalry and a Horse Artillery Battery. Franklin was undoubtedly under the impression that his left was in considerable danger, and eventually when Meade and Gibbon advanced for the final effort, the whole of Doubleday's Division was faced to the south to meet this threat, thus depriving Meade of support in his attack ; it was owing to lack of support that Meade was unable to make good his first success.

The great lesson to be learnt from Franklin's attack is the absolute necessity for support. It does not in the least follow that support can best be given by bringing troops up directly from the rear ; it will often happen that more assistance can be given by coming into action on one or both flanks. Modern weapons have a much greater range than those in use in the Civil War—this, of course, affects the problem of how best to give support. Even in the Civil War we find that by pressing the attack at a certain place it was possible to relieve pressure elsewhere ; but this was generally effected by what might be called playing upon the fears and apprehensions of the



hostile commander, more than by the actual effect upon the enemy's troops.

Now, however, if the nature of the country permits of it, actual and immediate support can be given by the rifle fire from a place nearly one mile distant. Do not forget this. We know how messages from a firing line keep coming back in a constant stream asking for reinforcements; the first instinct of the man behind is to immediately push in more troops directly from the rear. Generally this is not the best way to give assistance. What is likely to happen is something like this—the supports advance, but as they get close to the firing line it is found that to get up to the latter it is necessary to cross a fire-swept zone; it may or may not be possible to cross this, it depends upon the state of the fire fight. Also, even if the supports get up to the firing line, they may find themselves in a bad position, exposed to a fire which they may be unable to return with effect. I have in my mind a situation somewhat similar to this during the Boer attack on Ladysmith on January 6, 1910; in that particular case we should have done better if we had sent the reinforcements up to a flank.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Spion Kop teaches the same lesson. Spion Kop is a small hill, probably not 400 yards across at the summit. On that exposed position we piled troops; we packed them like sardines;

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the fight at Cæsar's Camp.

very few of the men were able to fire off their rifles without danger of hitting a comrade, yet there they had to lie all day under a heavy fire which they could not return. If, instead of sending fresh troops into that small space to form a target for the enemy, Warren had assaulted the ridge held by the Boers on the left of Spion Kop, he could, undoubtedly, have relieved the pressure. Later in the day General Lyttelton did, in fact, considerably relieve the situation by sending two battalions to drive the Boers from some high ground on the right of Spion Kop.

It will be recollected that there was a thick fog in Fredericksburg up to about 10 a.m.; it was there nearly every day at that time of year. At Spion Kop, also, there was a mist nearly every morning up to 8 o'clock. What was there to prevent our pushing up, under cover of the fog, to within 300 yards or so of the Boers on the ridge to the left of Spion Kop? We could have entrenched there; behind was a position from which Artillery fire might have been brought to bear all along the ridge. When the fog lifted we could either have assaulted at once, if the chances were in favour of surprise, or we could have overwhelmed the Boers with our combined Infantry and Artillery fire, and *then* assaulted.

Just a word about the Cavalry. As usual, Lee and Stuart made full use of the Confederate Cavalry. We have seen how Stuart and his

Horse Artillery Battery were placed forward on a flank. This is the position recommended by Bernhardt, but like most ideals it will not usually be easy to attain. If both sides propose to keep their Cavalry forward on the flanks, then either one side or the other must give way or the opposing Cavalry neutralise each other. Although we can hardly hope that our enemy will handle his Cavalry as badly as Burnside did his, still we should aim at our ideal, otherwise we certainly will not achieve it. After all, even if we do not succeed in our endeavour, we may prevent the enemy succeeding in his, which is a line of reasoning sometimes overlooked.

In this particular case Stuart did good work; he delayed and harried Meade's original advance, and later on he prevented Doubleday's Division from supporting Meade and Gibbon. So it may fairly be said that Stuart and his Cavalry pulled their weight in the actual battle.

But what can be said for Burnside's handling of his Cavalry? According to the official records there were 5,884 Cavalry available for line of battle—there were exactly five casualties in the four Brigades! This speaks for itself. In no plan of the battle that I have seen are the Cavalry even shown. This is a curious state of affairs. The Cavalry could only have been used on Franklin's left—the cramped nature of the country on the right preventing Cavalry being

of any use to Sumner. It may be that Burnside did not like to send the Cavalry across the river until his Infantry had gained more ground for Cavalry to manœuvre in; but if this was his reason it was a poor one. If the Federal Cavalry had been massed on Franklin's left and had been pushed boldly out forward of that flank, the effect on the battle might have been considerable. In any case, Stuart would have been kept so busy that Doubleday's Division could have joined with Meade and Gibbon in their attack.

Even if the Cavalry had been sent to Port Royal or Skinker's Neck, it would have been better than doing nothing with them.

We must remember that the Federal Cavalry was split up among the three "Grand Divisions." There was no Cavalry mass immediately under the orders of the C.-in-C.; there was no Officer in supreme command of the Cavalry to whom the C.-in-C. could look for advice on the general handling of the mounted troops. This was a faulty arrangement.

The actual distribution of the Cavalry was as follows:

General Averell's Cavalry was attached to Hooker's "Grand Division."

General Pleasanton's Cavalry was attached to Sumner's "Grand Division."

General Bayard's Cavalry was attached to Franklin's "Grand Division."

As might have been expected with such an organisation, the handling of the Cavalry was indifferent to a degree. General Averell's Cavalry reconnoitred to the right towards Hartwood Church, but kept north of the river.

General Pleasanton's Cavalry remained massed on the Federal side of the river near the pontoon bridges at Fredericksburg.

General Bayard's Cavalry actually crossed the river with Franklin's "Grand Division"; but beyond a feeble reconnaissance in the early stages of the battle, it neither attempted nor accomplished anything, as it was kept back behind the Infantry. General Bayard was killed by a shell while with Franklin's Headquarters, where he had gone to wait for orders for his Cavalry. It was distinctly unfortunate that Bayard should have been one of the five Cavalry casualties, as he was considered one of the best Cavalry leaders.

Compare Lee's handling of his Cavalry at this battle and at the Battle of Antietam; we will find that he applied exactly similar principles and with equal success on both occasions. The Cavalry were forward on the right flank at Fredericksburg and forward on the left flank at Antietam. Stuart made full use of his few guns at both fights; he had a grand Horse Artillery commander in young Pelham.

Just a few words about Lee and his Army.<sup>1</sup>

On the night of the 10th-11th, when Burnside was trying to throw his Army across the river, the Confederate Army was distributed as follows:

*Longstreet.* 4 Divisions.

From Beck's Island to just south of Lee's Hill—a front of about four miles.

From left to right—the Divisions of Anderson, McLaws, Pickett, and Hood, in the order named.

*Jackson.* 4 Divisions.

1 Division (A. P. Hill) on Longstreet's right, on the heights by Hamilton's Crossing.

1 Division (Taliaferro) in reserve behind A. P. Hill.

1 Division (Early) at Skinker's Neck, twelve miles below Fredericksburg.

1 Division (D. H. Hill) at Port Royal, eighteen miles below Fredericksburg.

The bulk of Stuart's Cavalry was in the Massaponax Valley, on A. P. Hill's right.

A total frontage for the whole Confederate Army of some twenty miles.

Thus six out of eight Divisions were concen-

<sup>1</sup> I do not propose to make any attempt to give more than a general outline of the Confederate movements, sufficient—I hope—to make the story intelligible. Those who wish to go into the subject more fully cannot do better than read "Stonewall Jackson" and Ropes' "Story of the Civil War."



trated directly opposite the crossing-place selected by Burnside.

There is every reason to believe that Burnside was under the erroneous impression that Lee had nearly half his force away at Skinker's Neck and Port Royal; we know now that only two Divisions—about a quarter of Lee's force—were then detached. But, considering the disparity in numbers, even this was a serious matter for the Confederates.

Mention has already been made of Burnside's slowness. It is impossible to understand why the Federal movements were so leisurely; it was obvious, as Burnside himself stated,<sup>1</sup> that the success of his plan depended upon surprising Lee, and the only way to do this was to move so quickly that the decisive fight would take place before the Confederates about Port Royal could come up.

As we know, the delay on the 11th was more or less unavoidable (although it might well have been foreseen), owing to the resistance offered to the bridge-building. But the whole of the 12th was wasted, and the delay in this case cannot be attributed to any hostile action. It was wilful—indeed almost criminal.

Lee, as a matter of fact, did not send for Early and D. H. Hill until noon on the 12th. If Burnside had attacked on the 12th it is

<sup>1</sup> See page 72.



questionable whether either Early or Hill would have arrived in time. It is doubtful whether Burnside would have been successful even under these circumstances—that is to say, if he had attacked in the same manner as he did on the 13th—but there can be no doubt that his chance of success would have been considerably increased.

The main lessons which we extract seem to be :

*That the Commander who has to act on the defensive is always at a certain disadvantage.* He has to conform to his enemy's actions, he has to wait until he can fathom the mind of his opponent before he can take steps to meet the attack. Now, it is absolutely essential that soldiers should realise what this means. Let us imagine ourselves in Lee's place. Two questions must have been paramount in his mind. *First*, Have I correctly divined the enemy's intentions? and *secondly*, Have I waited too long before taking action?

The importance of this second question is not always realised either by soldiers or military historians. The ordinary commander is almost always too late, he wants to make sure before committing himself.

Lee, evidently, was not satisfied until midday on the 12th that the Federal attack was going to be made opposite Fredericksburg; otherwise

he would probably have sent orders earlier to the Divisions at Port Royal and Skinker's Neck. As it was these two Divisions did not arrive until early morning on the 13th.

Even a great leader like Lee must have found acting on the defensive an anxious business indeed, but Burnside did not make the most of the advantage of the offensive. By being so slow he practically did all in his power to help his enemy.

We are always told, and with truth, that we should try and assume the offensive; but the great object in the offensive is to bring decisive numbers at the decisive place *at the right time*. Generally speaking this can only be achieved if the execution of the plan is so swift and the blow so heavy that the enemy is unable to bring troops up in time. We must thoroughly grasp this—we must understand it so thoroughly that it becomes part of our second nature, and let us hope that if we, ourselves, ever become Commanders in the field, we shall instinctively strike quickly and heavily.

It is worth noting how Jackson eventually posted his four Divisions. A. P. Hill's Divisions furnished the whole of the first line—a front of 2,600 yards ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles). The second line was formed by Taliaferro on the left and Early on the right. The third line, or reserve, was formed by D. H. Hill's Division.

Henderson says that Jackson gave the whole front to A. P. Hill, instead of giving each Division a section of the line, because the position had to be occupied before Early and D. H. Hill arrived. After the latter arrived it would have been too hazardous to make a change. Taliaferro's Division might, however, have been brought up into the first line. It must have been quite impossible for A. P. Hill to control his Division on such a long front. If it could have been done, it would have simplified command if the front had been divided into Sections, the Divisions being in depth rather than length; as is recommended in our F.S.R.

It has sometimes been urged that Lee should have counter-attacked with the object of turning the Federal repulse into a defeat. There were, however, very strong arguments against such an attempt. The Federal Guns on the Stafford Heights would have been able to support their Infantry. Longstreet says his troops were on such a broad front—four miles—that it would have been difficult to collect them; and besides, he adds, no preparations had been made for taking the offensive, and the Federal attacks continued right up to dark. Jackson had his 30,000 men on a much narrower front—only two miles. After Meade and Gibbon had been repulsed, Jackson thought of making a

decisive attack in conjunction with Stuart, and arrangements were made accordingly; but as soon as Jackson's troops debouched on to the plain they would have come under the fire of Franklin's Artillery and it must be remembered that Franklin had six whole Divisions which had hardly been under fire. To attack this force would have been a serious matter and success would have been extremely doubtful. Under these circumstances Jackson decided not to attack.

A night attack might have offered better results, especially against Fredericksburg, where the Federals were undoubtedly much demoralised. But against this was the uncertainty attendant on all night fighting, and then the situation at daylight had to be considered. Even if the night attack had been successful, the Confederates at daylight would have found themselves exposed to the Artillery fire from the Stafford Heights. But the truth appears to be that Longstreet was hardly in a position to make a night attack.

The position was much as Lee had foreseen, a fight at Fredericksburg did not offer decisive results; the river and the commanding position on the opposite bank made any turning movements against the Federal flanks or rear extremely difficult, and at the same time made a pursuit almost out of the question.

So ended the battle, and although the tactics and armament of those days are different from what we have at present, I think it will be agreed that we can learn valuable lessons for our guidance in the future.

War is full of apparent paradoxes, and we find success does not always follow a rigid adherence to what we call the rules of war. When Burnside took over command from McClellan, Lee had divided his Army in the presence of a concentrated enemy; yet Lee was not defeated.

Again, we find that Lee fought an absolutely passive defensive battle—and yet he was successful—although naturally the success was not decisive.

The casual student of war would be almost certain to draw wrong conclusions from this campaign. The fact is, if we study war at all, we ought to study it very closely. In this particular campaign we see that Lee ignored certain principles, but he did so with a very good reason.

The battles in Virginia up to this date had almost all been won by the Army which stood on the defensive. At the first Bull's Run the Federals were the aggressors, though the Confederates counter-attacked later in the day. Malvern Hill was a bloody repulse for Lee. Antietam was an equally bloody repulse for the Federals, and now Fredericksburg.

At first sight this may shake our confidence in the value of the offensive, and at the time both Federals and Confederates were inclined to think that it was better to await attack. Henderson, however, puts us on the right lines when he says "a position is as strong as its flanks": at Malvern Hill, at Antietam, and at Fredericksburg the flanks were exceptionally strong; in all these battles the flanks were protected by rivers. At Malvern Hill and Antietam the defenders fought with their backs to a river, and we have seen that the river at Fredericksburg was in no way a source of weakness to Burnside after he had been repulsed. Just think over these examples, they will help us to form correct opinions on strategy and war, and will make us realise that (1) as much depends upon the execution as upon the plan itself; (2) if we are going to take the offensive we must strike *hard* and strike *quickly*; (3) there is no surprise like celerity; (4) a position is as strong as its flanks; (5) a passive defence never leads to decisive results; (6) a good position for the Cavalry is forward on a flank; (7) attacks should always be well supported; (8) orders should be clear, and above all the main intention should be as clear as crystal.

The night after the battle was a miserable one for the Federal Army, the troops on the right passed the night huddled up in the streets of



Fredericksburg; it was very cold and no fires were allowed, the place was full of wounded and dying men. The troops were much shaken after their bloody experiences during the day. As Couch puts it: "The pressure of a fight carries you through, but after all is over and you have been whipped you do not feel very pugnacious. The men were in a nervous state and had lost confidence in their Commander." Couch also tells us that Burnside came into the town during the night and had a talk with him. Burnside did not appear to be oppressed and was outwardly cheerful; for which we must take off our hats to him, as we know he felt that he was to blame and was terribly distressed at all the useless waste of life.

With Franklin things were not so bad, the men bivouacked ready for battle.

Burnside had first contemplated renewing the attack the next morning, but was persuaded to give up the idea.<sup>1</sup>

The 14th and 15th passed without any renewal of the fighting. On the night of the 15th Burnside withdrew unmolested to his own side of the river. In his report to Halleck Burnside praised the behaviour of the troops, and added: "For the failure in the attack I am responsible." He also explained that he thought a large portion of the enemy were about Port Royal

<sup>1</sup> See "Battle and Leaders," vol. iii. p. 127.



and that the delay was caused by the fog and the bridge-building, and that he had hoped to cut the enemy in two. He concludes his report: "The fact that I decided to move from Warrenton on to this line rather against the opinion of the President, the Secretary for War, and yourself, and that you left the whole management in my hand, without giving me orders, makes me responsible." It was, in short, a fine, manly report.

Just one word about the XII Corps, which, as already stated, had been left by McClellan at Harper's Ferry; and the XI Corps, which had been left by Burnside to guard the communications and country about Centreville. Burnside on December 9 (just before the battle) ordered these two Corps to concentrate about Centreville (50 miles from the battlefield) and Dumfries (20 miles from the battlefield) with instructions to be ready to move at once as a Grand Reserve to the Army of the Potomac. Burnside's idea was to keep open the road from Alexandria, via Dumfries, to Falmouth, and to use the XI and XII Corps to follow up any success. During the battle the Corps were at the places mentioned above. Why were they not made use of?

## CHAPTER V

AFTER the battle of Fredericksburg the Federal Army resumed its old positions on the north bank of the river (see Map No. 4).

The morale of the Army was much shaken; grumbling, criticism, and despondency were rife, and officers and men were deserting wholesale. The truth was neither officers nor men had any confidence in Burnside, and their distrust was fostered by Hooker and other superior Generals, who were loud in denunciation of their Commanding General.

Burnside made one more effort to attack Lee, this time by Bank's Ford, but it ended miserably owing to the roads being in such a bad state as to make movement almost impossible. This attempt, known as "The Mud March," was made on January 20 and 21, and the Army in general regarded the rain as providential.

Almost immediately after "The Mud March," Burnside found his position intolerable. He prepared an order dismissing Hooker, Franklin, and other high officers from the U. S. Army.

He was persuaded to take it to Lincoln for his approval. Lincoln disapproved, and Burnside resigned his appointment. Hooker was then given command of the Army of the Potomac.

There is every reason to believe that Lincoln did not like the new appointment, but his Cabinet were of opinion that, for political reasons, Hooker was the only possible man. They feared that the other Generals might, if successful, become dangerous candidates for the Presidency.

The following letter from Lincoln gives us a good idea of the relations between the President and his new General :

WASHINGTON,  
*January 26, 1863.*

MAJOR-GEN. HOOKER,

General,—I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right.

You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable, quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during Gen. Burnside's command of the Army,

you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honourable brother officer.

I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a Dictator. Of course it is not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those Generals who gain successes can set up Dictators. What I now ask of you is a military success, and I will risk the Dictatorship.

The Government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders.

I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the Army, of criticising their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you.

I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an Army while such a spirit prevails in it.

And now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN,

There is much sound common sense in this letter. Hooker, we are told, was much impressed and said : " He talks to me like a father. I shall not answer this letter until I have won him a great victory." <sup>1</sup>

Hooker was forty-eight years of age. He had graduated at West Point and served in the Mexican war. He had left the Army after sixteen years' service, had tried farming, and had been a county road surveyor. During the Mexican war he had made an enemy of General Scott by criticising him severely. When the Civil War broke out he wished to rejoin the Army, but General Scott would have nothing to do with him. He witnessed the first Bull's Run as a spectator, and in an interview with Lincoln shortly afterwards he is reported to have said : " I was at Bull's Run the other day, Mr. President, and it is no vanity in me to say that I am a d——d sight better general than any you had on that fight " —he was made a Brigadier-General almost immediately. During the Peninsular Campaign he rose to be a Divisional Commander, and was promoted to a Corps before the battle of Antietam ; at Fredericksburg he commanded the Centre Grand Division.

Hooker, who was known as " Fighting Joe " (a nickname which we are told he did not appreciate),

<sup>1</sup> " The Campaign of Chancellorsville," p. 10.

was a fine-looking man, with side whiskers, sandy hair, and a weak chin. From all accounts he occasionally did himself too well : the men had a song called "Joe Hooker is our Leader" :—

"The Union boys are moving on the left and on the right,  
The bugle-call is sounding, our shelters we must strike ;  
Joe Hooker is our leader ; he takes his whisky strong,  
So our knapsacks we will sling, and go marching along."

Butterfield, the chief of the staff, though not a graduate of West Point, was not at all a bad staff officer, and we shall hear more of him during the Chancellorsville Campaign.

A few days after his appointment, Hooker received a letter from Halleck dated January 31, telling him that General Schenck was in command of Harper's Ferry and the Shenandoah Valley with headquarters at Baltimore, and that General Heintzelman was in command of the Washington Defences. He was informed that these two Generals would co-operate as far as possible, but that they were neither of them strong enough to resist the enemy's main Army. Halleck continued : "We look to the Army of the Potomac to either cover these places (Washington and Harper's Ferry) or succour them in the case of their being seriously threatened. In regard to the operations of your Army, you are the best judge, *keeping in view the above considerations.*"<sup>1</sup> It was also

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J.G.

impressed upon Hooker that the first object was not Richmond, but the defeat and scattering of Lee's Army, which threatened Washington and the line of the Upper Potomac. He was told to keep the enemy occupied and prevent his making raids and large detachments; he was to injure the enemy with least injury to himself, which Halleck suggested could best be accomplished by actual passage of the river or by feints. Halleck concluded: "I can only advise that an attempt be made, and as soon as possible."

In order to understand the general situation, we must study the map.

*Maj.-Gen. Schenck*, was in command of some 30,000 men about Romney, Winchester, Harper's Ferry, and scattered in posts guarding the Baltimore and Ohio railway.

*Maj.-Gen. Heintzelman*, had some 45,000 men for the Defences of Washington; with posts well out at Centreville, Fairfax C.H., and as far south as Occoquan.

*Maj.-Gen. Dix*, had his Headquarters at Fortress Munroe and commanded all the Federal Troops in that neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup>

North of the James River, Dix held Fortress Munroe with posts at Yorktown and Gloucester, which commanded the York River—a line of communication which might come in very useful in the event of Hooker advancing on Richmond.

<sup>1</sup> See Map No. 2.



Williamsburg (13 miles N.W. from Yorktown) was also occupied, and a watch kept from there on the Southern movements in the Peninsula.

South of the James River, the Federals held Norfolk—in order to prevent the enemy using it as a naval base, and Suffolk was also held.

In all, Dix had about 20,000 men under his Orders.

*Under Foster* were 16,000 in North Carolina, with H.Q. at New Berne, about 160 miles S.S.E. of Richmond (see Map No. 2).

The Confederates, under Jones and Imboden, were known to have forces in the Shenandoah, with Headquarters about Staunton and Newmarket. Information as to numbers was vague, but they were thought to have about 2000 or 3000 Cavalry and 6000 or 7000 Infantry.

Lee's strength was fairly well known to be 70,000 to 90,000 and it was thought that the bulk of his Cavalry were about Culpeper C.H.

The Federal Navy was distributed as follows :—

*The Potomac Flotilla*, one Division stationed off Aquia Creek, and another at the mouth of the Rappahannock.

*The North Atlantic Fleet*, stationed off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay.

In order to realise the Federal difficulties, it must be clearly understood that most of the

inhabitants in Virginia were fiercely hostile to the Northern Cause. The result was that guerilla bands were constantly being formed usually dressed in civilian clothes; and small parties of Federal soldiers, both on patrol duty and on out-posts, were frequently attacked. The women and the children did all in their power to send over information to the Southern Army—many of them were believed to be regular secret service agents.

Hooker immediately he was appointed to command set to work to try and improve the morale of his Army—no easy task, as we can gather from the President's letter and from letters written by soldiers at the time.

The number of men absent without leave was enormous; Hooker gives the figures as—

2,935 Officers.

82,188 enlisted men.

He complained that the soldiers were being sent suits of civilian clothes by their female and other relatives, in order to assist them to desert. And the Commander of the Naval Flotilla was requested to try and prevent deserters crossing the river to join the enemy.

Hooker inaugurated a furlough system, by which regular furlough, not to exceed 15 days, was to be granted to a percentage both of officers and men. He started a regular system of

inspecting Units, and if they were reported on badly he stopped their furlough in Army Orders.

On February 5 an Army order was issued abolishing The Grand Divisions, as it was found that it was a cumbrous organisation impeding rather than facilitating the dispatch of current business. Hereafter Corps were to be considered the Unit, and the Cavalry were to be consolidated into one Corps.

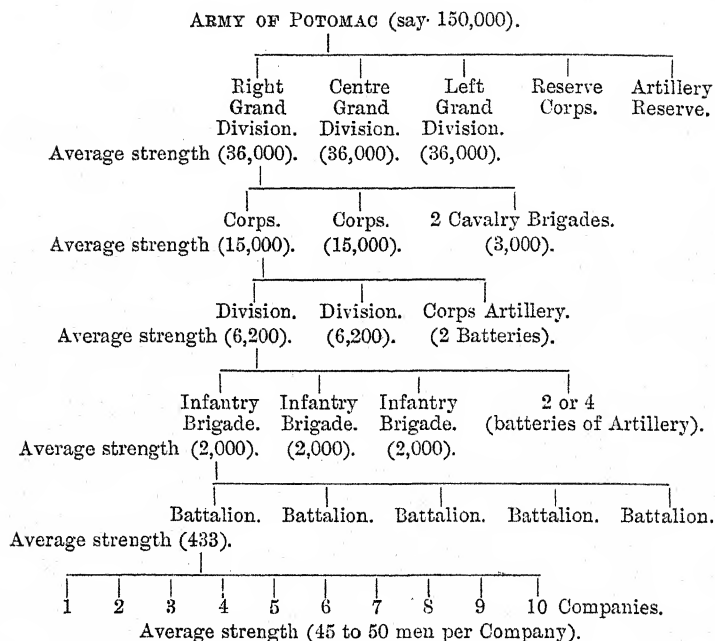
It is worth while considering briefly this organisation question.

There had been 3 Grand Divisions and a Reserve Corps, with 1 or 2 Cavalry Brigades attached to each Grand Division; while under the new scheme there were to be 7 Infantry Corps and 1 Cavalry Corps—8 big units in all—rather a large number to be under the command of one man, 6 to 8 units being generally considered the maximum one man can properly manage.

It cannot be said that either the old or the new organisation was good. The trouble was that the Divisions, Brigades, and regiments were too weak in strength, which, of course, meant that the Commander-in-Chief's orders had to pass through an unnecessary number of channels before they reached the troops—the men who had to act on them.

The following diagrams may assist the reader to compare the two systems:

## OLD SYSTEM.

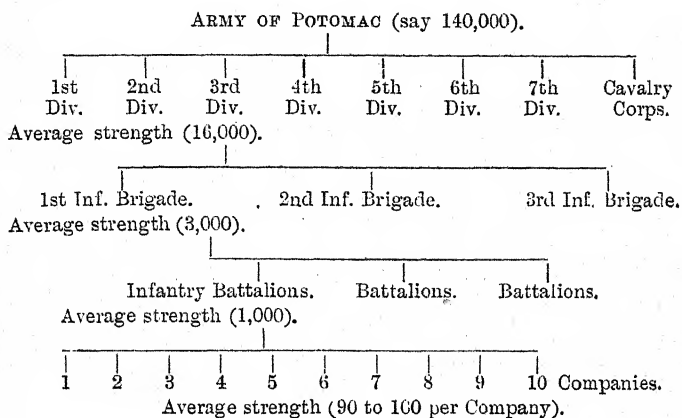


As previously mentioned, this made a terribly long chain of command. Under the new system, Hooker eliminated one channel altogether, *i.e.* the Grand Division commander, which change must undoubtedly have facilitated the passage of orders. Just imagine how long it must have taken to get out orders under the Grand Division System.

It will, doubtless, be noticed that the Corps in the Federal Army were approximately the same strength as Divisions in our Army of to-day (1913).

If Hooker, besides abolishing the Grand Divi-

sions, had also amalgamated the two Divisions of each Corps, and called the joint unit a Division, and applied the same principle to Brigades and Battalions, he would have produced a much better organised Army. It would have worked out much as follows :—



Although it is suggested that the above organisation would have been an improvement, it must be remembered that it might have been exceedingly difficult for Hooker to carry out such drastic changes. Battalions were all raised by "States," not by the "Union," and, in some cases, the Brigades were formed of Battalions all belonging to the same "State." Also a reorganisation, such as that outlined above, would have thrown many senior officers out of employment, and some of them would probably have used their political influence to make things uncomfortable for Hooker.

The fact is, the mistake was in the original organisation. Once committed to it, it was no easy thing to alter.

Among other changes, Hooker also improved the Information Bureau. McClellan had made great use of detectives and civilians who, being ignorant of soldiering matters, often led him astray. It was also found that the information obtained by the secret service, cavalry, prisoners, and other sources, was seldom properly collated and sifted at headquarters. Hooker placed the Information Bureau under his Provost Marshal, and, on the whole, the results were satisfactory. A great source of information to both Armies was in the somewhat free intercourse which took place between the picquets; in the Official Records we find continued reference to this. Also, many people who carried on a lucrative trade by running contraband to the enemy were, undoubtedly, acting as spies—probably, in many cases, for both sides.

Hooker's Corps were commanded as follows :—

I Corps.	Reynolds.
II	„ Couch.
III	„ Sickles.
V	„ Meade.
VI	„ Sedgwick.
XI	„ Sigel (later by Howard).
XII	„ Slocum.
Cav.	„ Stoneman.

The XI and XII Corps had now joined Hooker's Army; they arrived shortly after the battle of Fredericksburg.

The IX Corps had disappeared. This was Burnside's old Corps, and it was devoted to him. It was probably for this reason that, shortly after Hooker's appointment, the IXth Corps was ordered to report to General Dix at Fortress Munroe. Dix was told to keep the Corps well concentrated as it would be probably required elsewhere. As a matter of fact it was shortly afterwards ordered to Cincinnati, on the Baltimore and Ohio Railway, to serve under Burnside, who was given a command in that neighbourhood.

Although this movement of the IX Corps to Fortress Munroe was not made with any idea of deceiving the enemy, still it seems to have had that effect, and the consequences were far reaching.

The IX Corps had disembarked at Newport News (near Fortress Munroe) by February 11. General Lee heard of this on February 14, and came to the conclusion that Hooker's plan was to transport his main force to the south of the James River, and to advance via Suffolk. Acting under this impression Lee sent Pickett's Division to Richmond on February 15, and Hood's Division was also held in readiness.

Mr. Davis, the Confederate President, became seriously alarmed about an advance from the



Suffolk direction, and sent Lee orders to send Hood's Division after Pickett's.

Thus the move of the IX Corps (15,000 strong) induced the enemy to detach two Divisions (13,500 strong), which meant that Lee had detached a larger proportion of his Army, and consequently Hooker was the gainer to that extent.

This incident shows the value of detachments, and how, in war, a move may have rather unlooked for results. Neither Hood's nor Pickett's Divisions rejoined Lee until after the battle of Chancellorsville. It must not, however, be thought that Hooker knew of the departure of Pickett and Hood for some time, he only heard rumours of it about February 25.

Just one word about the Federal method of protection. There were two lines of protection, the outer undertaken by the Cavalry, the inner by the Infantry Corps. (See Map No. 1.)

The 1st Cavalry Division (Pleasanton) formed an observation line from about 6 miles east of Dumfries to the Potomac Creek.

The 2nd Cavalry Division (Averell) took on the line to the Rappahannock, passing about one mile west of Hartwood Church.

The 3rd Cavalry Division (Gregg), protected the left flank of the Army between Skinker's Neck and Belle Plain.

It is hard to believe that the Cavalry line was a

good one. It was too defensive altogether, and too close to the Infantry line to be of any practical value. Compare Hooker's and Lee's handling of their Cavalry; there is much to be learnt therefrom. The boldness of Lee's handling showed the strong grasp of a great commander—for such Lee was.

The Confederate Cavalry was not tied down to a close defensive line just in front of the Infantry outposts. What would Lee have thought of taking up a Cavalry line from, say, U.S. Ford to Chancellorsville, and so round the rear of his Army past Guiney station to Port Royal. Yet this was the principle upon which Hooker acted.

Lee had larger ideas than this, not only were they larger and more aggressive, but *they were safer*, and answered the purpose in view. The bulk of the Confederate Cavalry was round about Culpeper C.H.; where not only was it a constant threat to the Federals, keeping them in daily fear of an advance up the Orange and Alexandria Railway, but it was so placed as to guard Lee's flank, and give timely warning of any turning movement from that direction. Stuart also either placed small Cavalry posts at the fords over the Rappahannock or kept them under close observation.

It is interesting to read what Stoneman (the Federal Cavalry Commander) has to say on this subject. On February 28, after some experience,

he wrote to say<sup>1</sup> that his Cavalry Corps consisted of about 12,000 men and 14,000 horses. The line he had to guard was close on 100<sup>2</sup> miles long! One-third of the Cavalry was on outpost duty at a time. This, according to Stoneman, worked out at 40 men a mile, and he pointed out that the actual number of men on sentry and picquet came to only 13 men a mile (the remainder being, of course, supports and reserves to the outposts). The line, consequently, was weak everywhere, and as it was so long the Cavalry had to march long distances to relieve the outposts, and he ends up by saying that the work was knocking up his horses, which were seriously in need of rest. So we see Hooker's disposition of his Cavalry was bad in every way, it did not achieve its object (*i.e.* to protect his Army), as it was weak everywhere, and therefore liable to be pushed in at any spot the enemy chose to concentrate against, and it entailed hard work on the men and especially on horses.

It is only fair to Hooker to say that Stoneman did not suggest any better disposition, nor did he appear to appreciate the fact that a bolder handling would have answered the purpose better, and would have been easier on the Cavalry.

Early in February Hooker decided to fortify his base at Aquia Creek; the work was put in hand at once and was completed by March 9.

<sup>1</sup> Official Records, xxv., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> I can only make it 50 on the map.—J. G.

On February 5 three Cavalry Regiments and one Battery were sent from near Falmouth, to reconnoitre and destroy a bridge which the Confederates were reported to be building at Rappahannock Station. The Cavalry were supported by one Division (Meade's V Corps), which was to hold the fords. The Cavalry found the enemy too strong for them, the bridge was not destroyed, and the Infantry did not come up to support the Cavalry. This little expedition can hardly have improved the morale of the Army.

On February 21 the Federal gunboats near Port Royal were bombarded by some Horse Artillery guns, one gunboat was injured, but the enemy did not cross the river.

About the same time an attempt was made by the Confederates to force the U.S. Ford, but they were driven back.

In the following communication from Hooker, February 25, we find the first record of his hearing that the enemy had sent troops away from his front:

"According to information from deserters, contraband and citizens, it appears that the enemy have decreased their forces in our front, two Divisions or more of Longstreet's Corps have gone to Tennessee and South Carolina. Enemy are under impression we are evacuating from Aquia Creek, leaving a sufficient force to keep Lee's Army in front of us. Jackson's Corps is left to guard the passage of the river. It is mentioned

that Ransom's Division<sup>1</sup> of Longstreet's Corps is the one gone to Tennessee or South Carolina, and Pickett's Division to Charleston."

This gives us a good idea of what Hooker thought at the time.

On the afternoon of February 25 Hooker received a report from General Averell (2nd Cavalry Division) to say that a large force of Cavalry (believed to be the Brigades of F. Lee and Hampton) were in front of the picquets at Hartwood Church.

Reports followed one another quickly, the general trend being that the enemy were aiming more at Dumfries and Stafford C.H. than at Hartwood Church.

The operations that followed, and the hustling of the Federal troops in all directions (see Map No. 1), afford a good object lesson as to how a Cavalry reconnaissance should be carried out, and show how the defenders are apt to march and countermarch to no purpose.

Briefly, Hooker put nearly his whole Cavalry Force in movement (all except Gregg's Cavalry Division on south flank). Averell's and Pleasanton's Divisions and the Reserve Brigade were hastily collected; but it is to be noted that it took a long time to concentrate them, which was only to be expected, considering how the Cavalry were scattered. By daylight on the 26th

<sup>1</sup> Ransom's Division was in North Carolina.

Averell's Division and the Reserve Brigade were at Hartwood Church, but Pleasanton was still 11 miles away at Aquia Church (about 11 miles north of Falmouth).

Besides these movements, Hooker telegraphed to General Heintzelman at Washington to ask for a Cavalry force to be sent down to Rappahannock station to cut off the enemy's retreat. Heintzelman did his best, but his Cavalry, like Hooker's, was scattered, and it took time to collect. He was able to send off 600 Cavalry from Fairfax C.H. on the night of the 25th—26th, but his main force, 2,000 strong, did not leave Centreville till 8 a.m. on the 27th. This force eventually reached Falmouth—having come down via Warrenton Junction—at 2 p.m. on the 29th; it had marched 90 miles, broken down many horses, and accomplished nothing. In the meantime the Confederates, having carried out their reconnaissance, withdrew as rapidly as they had advanced. Stoneman followed them up from Hartwood Church on the 26th, but on arrival at Kelly's Ford he found that the enemy were safely across before him. He received orders to cross and destroy the enemy in his camps beyond the river—a prospect which was not appreciated, as it entailed swimming an icy cold stream. Stoneman was consequently much relieved to hear about 5 p.m. on the 26th, that if the enemy had crossed, the Cavalry were to return to their camps.



Let us see what force of the enemy had created all this disturbance. It consisted of 400 men of F. Lee's Cavalry Brigade! F. Lee had left Culpeper at 9 a.m. on the 24th, and crossed the river at Kelly's Ford, many of the horses having to swim. His main body bivouacked at Morrisville with a few scouts in touch with the Union Cavalry line near Hartwood Church. F. Lee left his bivouac at 8 a.m. on the 25th, in two columns by Warrenton Pike and the road to the north. No enemy was met until he came up to the Federal outpost line at 11.30 a.m. Coming, as he did, in a solid block, he pushed in the outposts with the greatest ease. The Federals were completely surprised. The Confederates, advancing with great boldness and rapidity, charged down with yells upon such fugitives as they came across, with the result that the Union troops broke and ran without offering any resistance worthy of the name, the 4th New York (a German regiment), to quote a Federal officer, "making exceptionally good time, considering the state of the roads"—the country was covered with about a foot of snow. The fugitives spread alarm and despondency, and, as usually happens on these occasions, greatly exaggerated the strength of the attacking force.

F. Lee, who knew his business thoroughly, pushed on boldly and rapidly until he bumped up against the Infantry posts about Berea Church,



within three and a half miles of Falmouth! By this time he had gained the information he required from prisoners and other sources, and it was time to be back before the enemy closed in on him. He therefore withdrew in good order, covered by a rearguard, bivouacked at Morrisville for the night of the 25th, and recrossed at Kelly's Ford on the morning of the 26th.

The Federals lost some 36 killed and wounded and 150 prisoners. The Confederates lost 14 killed, wounded, and missing.

This small incident shows how to carry out a reconnaissance; transport nil, move rapidly, strike boldly and in a block, push on boldly *up to a point*, and then, having gained the required information, there should be no delay in falling back, the main body retiring quietly and steadily, covered by a rearguard.

It shows also the weakness of a long, scattered line of outposts; it shows how long it takes to concentrate to meet a sudden attack; it shows the exaggerated reports that come streaming in, the rumours of the enemy here, there and everywhere, and the difficulty of correctly appreciating the best place for concentrating to meet the attack. It is also an object lesson on the length of time it takes to pass messages from the outposts to headquarters and back again; and shows how often important orders are delayed or lost in transmission.

Hooker should have asked himself at once, Why did the enemy make this attack? They were hardly likely to have done it for fun.

The truth was, Lee was getting so uneasy at the rumours of Hooker moving down to the James River, that he made the reconnaissance to clear up the situation. This F. Lee did, and assured himself that at any rate the great bulk of Hooker's army still remained about Falmouth.

F. Lee, who knew Averell well, left the following note behind him: "I wish you would put up your sword, leave my State and go home. You ride a good horse, I ride a better. Yours can beat mine at running. If you won't go home, return my visit and bring me a sack of coffee."<sup>1</sup>

This letter was duly delivered to Averell; as we shall see, it roused him to action.

It has already been mentioned that the Federals were considerably bothered by bands of guerillas and bushwhackers; this nuisance had been steadily increasing. A certain Captain Mosby operated in the country between Warrenton and Fairfax C.H. (see Map No. 1) and had made himself an abominable nuisance. His most daring feat is worth mentioning as it helps us to realise the Federal troubles, and in many ways it resembles some of our experiences in South Africa. On

<sup>1</sup> "The Campaign of Chancellorsville," p. 73.

March 5 Mosby set out with twenty-nine men from Aldie; he passed through the Federal Cavalry picquets near Chantilly under cover of darkness, the Federals mistaking the party for one of their own returning scouting patrols. Guided by a deserter, Mosby went to Fairfax C.H., and although the village was full of the enemy, he successfully captured General Stoughton, a captain, and thirty men, whom he quietly pulled out of their beds and brought back successfully to Culpeper C.H.

Incidents of this sort, although not having a vital effect on the war, all tended to increase the morale and dash of the Southerners and had a depressing effect on the Northerners.

On March 14, Averell obtained leave to return F. Lee's visit. His orders were to attack and rout the Cavalry forces of the enemy reported to be in the vicinity of Culpeper Court House (see Map No. 1). There is no doubt that Averell was anxious to square accounts with his friend F. Lee, while Hooker was anxious that his Cavalry should have a chance of showing that they were fully equal to their redoubtable enemy.

Averell with 3,000 troopers (two Brigades and one Battery) set off on March 16. He halted for the night at Morrisville; he had heard that a hostile Cavalry force of between 250 and 1,000 was reported to be operating about Brentsville

(eighteen miles to N.), and he therefore detached 900 men to watch this force.

Soldiers would do well to ask themselves this question: "Was Averell right to do this?"

It is by asking ourselves such questions and not being satisfied until we have formed an opinion that we can train our soldierly judgment. It is no exaggeration to say that we may find one day that success or failure in war may depend upon our being able to make a decision such as this. We can have little hesitation in saying Averell was wrong. There were no depots or convoys to be guarded between his force and the main Army. Averell was free to go anywhere; he carried four days' rations and one day's forage; what difference did it make to him if such a small force of the enemy did get between him and the main Army? Say the enemy from Brentsville did come down, if Averell had his whole force together (3,000 men) he would have destroyed him or avoided the fight as he thought fit. But sending away 900 men meant that the force available to carry out his real mission (to destroy the enemy's Cavalry about Culpeper C.H.) was weaker to that extent—a serious matter.

It is not proposed to enter into the details of the Cavalry fight that took place next day just south of Kelly's Ford. The Federal Advanced Guard found the ford held—the river was about 100 yards broad and the ford 4 ft. deep. After

considerable delay the ford was captured, and Averell formed up his command on the far side. The enemy's Cavalry from Culpeper turned up almost at once, and charged. The charge was beaten back by the fire of Averell's dismounted troopers behind a stone wall. It was in this charge that the gallant Pelham was killed. It will be recollected how well this "boy major" served his guns at the second Bull's Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. He and J. E. B. Stuart had ridden over from Fredericksburg on court martial duty to F. Lee's camp, and while they were there news had come in that the Federals were crossing at Kelly's Ford. Neither Stuart nor Pelham was the sort of man to lose the chance of seeing a fight, and they rode out with Lee's Brigade. Young Pelham joined in the charge. His loss was deeply felt.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his pocket was found a letter from a friend of his in the Federal Army. "After long absence I write. God bless you, dear Pelham, I am proud of your success."—"The Campaign of Chancellorsville," p. 97.

The following extract from General J. E. B. Stuart's Orders of March 20, 1863, may be of interest:

"The Major-General Commanding approaches with reluctance the painful duty of announcing to the Division its irreparable loss in the death of Major John Pelham, Commanding the Horse Artillery. He fell mortally wounded at the Battle of Kellysville on March 17, with the battle-cry on his lips and the light of victory beaming from his eye. . . . The memory of 'the gallant Pelham,' his manly virtues, his noble nature and purity of character are enshrined as a sacred legacy in the hearts of all who knew him. His record has been bright and spotless, his career brilliant and successful. He fell the noblest of sacrifices on the altar of his country, to whose glorious services he had dedicated his life from the beginning of the war."

F. Lee withdrew about a mile and formed up on the far side of a small stream (Carter's Run). Averell again awaited attack, and again Lee accommodated him. The result was, as before, the Confederates were driven back almost altogether by fire, some of it being delivered mounted. Lee made another charge against Averell's right, but this also was driven back, this time principally by gun fire backed up by a mounted charge. The pursuit was only continued to the far side of the stream.

F. Lee once more rallied his men about half a mile further back, and prepared for a fourth time to meet Averell. There were no supports for Lee to fall back on, but he ordered empty trains to run backwards and forwards on the railway line in his rear. Averell heard the rumbling of the railway cars, and, having previously been informed by prisoners that J. E. B. Stuart himself was present on the field, jumped to the conclusion that the enemy was being reinforced. Averell in his report says: "It was 5.30 p.m.; it was necessary to advance my Cavalry upon their entrenchments,<sup>1</sup> to make a direct and desperate attack, or to withdraw across the river. Either operation would be attended with immediate hazard. My horses were much exhausted. We had been successful thus far. I deemed it proper to withdraw."

<sup>1</sup> Pure imagination; they had none.

And withdraw he did, followed up by Lee. It was a pitiful exhibition. The Federal troops were victorious, but their commander was beat. And let us ask ourselves who beat him? It was not the Southern troopers, gallantly though they had fought. It was F. Lee, whose soldierly spirit dominated that of the Northern Commander.

The Confederates could only bring into action 800 or 900 men; Averell had 2,100. Lee lost about 100 killed and wounded, and 45 prisoners = 145 = 11%. Averell lost about 56 killed and wounded, and 30 prisoners = 86 = under 4%.

Soldiers should think over these Cavalry affairs, especially taking note of how a firm front and determined action can on occasions see us safely out of an apparently hopeless situation.

Averell, who had not forgotten Lee's letter to him, left the following note:—

“Dear Fitz. Here's your coffee. Here's your visit. How do you like it? How's that horse?”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “The Campaign of Chancellorsville,” p. 101.



## CHAPTER V (*continued*)

WHATEVER Averell may have thought of the engagement at Kellysville, and he appears to have been well pleased with himself, Hooker was dissatisfied, for he wrote: "He (Averell) was sent to perform a certain duty and failed to accomplish it from imaginary apprehensions."

To return to Hooker and his plans. It will be remembered that he received his instructions from Halleck on January 31, in which he was urged to commence operations as soon as possible, keeping particularly in view the importance of covering Washington and Harper's Ferry either directly or indirectly. On March 27 a reminder was received from Halleck, who said that from all accounts Lee's Army was much scattered, and that conflicts were expected both in the south and west which would probably attract the enemy's attention—Halleck, therefore, again urged the advisability of the Army of the Potomac striking a blow as early as possible.

The Official Records of about this date show that Hooker was considerably worried by the fact

that many of his soldiers were due for discharge. As is well known, the Government made the great mistake at the outbreak of hostilities of enlisting men for short periods<sup>1</sup>; the consequence was that in Hooker's Army alone 16,480 two-year men, and 6,421 nine-month men were coming up for discharge—a serious matter. Hooker was anxious to fight before these trained soldiers left the ranks, but there seems little doubt that the men themselves, for the most part, were not altogether in agreement with Hooker. It was thought at first that a system of bounties would induce the men to re-enlist, but this proved a mistake. The soldiers discovered that they could make more money in other ways: for instance they might go home, enjoy some leave and pose as heroes, they could then accept a sum of money as substitutes for conscripts who were unwilling to fight and who were prepared to pay in proportion to their unwillingness. Under such a system it is not surprising that Hooker found it difficult to persuade the men to remain in the ranks.

As regards Hooker's plans for attacking Lee, the possibilities open to him were broadly :

1. Attack direct, as at the battle of Fredericksburg.
2. A turning movement down stream, *i.e.* towards Port Royal.
3. A turning movement up stream.

<sup>1</sup> A mistake which we repeated, and with less excuse, during the South African War.—J.G.

The idea of repeating the attack direct as at Fredericksburg appealed to no one—least of all to the private soldier.

The turning movement down stream would have been difficult, owing to the breadth of the river at and below Port Royal (300 yards at the latter place): the actual throwing of the bridges would have taxed the resources of the pontoon train. Besides, the country on the left bank was marshy, and movements of troops on a large scale would probably be observed by the Confederates. Another drawback was that it would leave the road to Washington open, and by this time it must have been well known that Lee was not the man to allow any opportunity of this sort to escape him.

Although the plan had these disadvantages, it should be noted that a successful passage of the river, followed by a quick advance would have struck across Lee's communications with Richmond and while the Southerners would probably have difficulty with their supply, Hooker would have been able to make Port Royal into an advanced base. Against this we must remember that Lee had an alternative line towards Gordonsville, and we know that both Lee and Hooker realised that a withdrawal on that place was quite possible. An advance from the Port Royal direction would also have enabled Hooker to avoid the densely wooded tract of country, known as "The Wilderness,"

which extended for some eight to ten miles on the right bank of the river between Germanna and Bank's Fords.

The third alternative—a turning movement up the river—had this great attraction: it directly covered Washington and moreover the river would make it extremely difficult for Lee to strike at the short line of communication to Aquia Creek. An advance in this direction also offered the possibility of active co-operation by the Washington Troops, at any rate in the early stages of the operation.

Lee must have given the whole question his earnest attention for months. We know that he did not anticipate that the main crossing would be made further west than the United States Ford. If we look at the map we see that if Hooker crossed further to the east, it meant that two rivers had to be crossed instead of one.

The rivers were considerable obstacles, about 100 yards broad at Kelly's and Germanna Fords, and 150 or more by Falmouth. But, it may be said, there are plenty of "Fords" marked in the map; so there are, but they were not always "fordable"—as we shall see later.

As regards the enemy, Hooker was fairly well informed. He knew that Longstreet, with Hood's and Pickett's divisions, was detached about Suffolk and North Carolina; although when we read the Official Records we find that information was

frequently coming in to the effect that Hood and Pickett had returned, or were about to return—notably a report from Pleasanton on April 10. However, as far as I can discover, Hooker never believed these reports, as he was in constant telegraphic communication with Dix and Peck (commanding at Suffolk, under General Dix), who were both certain that Longstreet was in the neighbourhood of Suffolk.

The probability is that Hooker exaggerated Lee's strength, but not to any marked degree. It is curious to note that Lee under-estimated Hooker's strength.

Hooker was under the erroneous impression that the enemy had a pontoon train somewhere about Hamilton's crossing, and he appears to have thought that in the event of his making a wide turning movement Lee would cross the river and strike at the communications with Aquia. I am inclined to think that it was some such consideration which eventually led Hooker to leave so large a proportion of his Army opposite Fredericksburg.

On April 5 Lincoln paid a visit to the Army; he talked to the officers and reviewed the troops at ceremonial parades, and his presence created considerable enthusiasm. We read that he said to Hooker and Couch: "I want to impress upon you two gentlemen—in your next fight PUT IN ALL YOUR MEN." The only other incident worth

mentioning is one that took place at a luncheon party given by General Sickles, when a Princess Salm-Salm won a wager by stealing a kiss from the President—rather to the annoyance of Mrs. Lincoln, who was present.<sup>1</sup>

Hooker at first appears to have been in favour of a turning movement round Lee's right—but it may well be that he only encouraged this rumour in order to deceive the enemy. On April 11 Hooker wrote to the President outlining his proposed plan. He said that after giving the subject his best reflection he had come to the conclusion that the most promising plan would be to turn the enemy's left flank and to employ the Cavalry to sever Lee's communications with Richmond. He was, however, apprehensive lest the enemy would retire at once on Richmond and thus escape; to meet this he proposed that the Cavalry should commence the operations by establishing themselves on the Richmond line, and thus, either check the enemy's retreat until he could come up—or oblige the enemy to retire on Culpeper and Gordonsville. The Cavalry were to cross the river above Rappahannock Bridge, and advance thence via Culpeper and Gordonsville and across the Fredericksburg-Richmond railway, somewhere in the vicinity of Hanover Junction.

<sup>1</sup> The Princess died in November 1912, after an adventurous career in different parts of the world, notably in Mexico and during the Franco-German War.



While the Cavalry were crossing, Hooker proposed to threaten the passage of the river at various points, and after the Cavalry had got well to the rear of the enemy, the passage was to be effected in earnest. Hooker ended by asking the President's approval and pointing out that his plan avoided the necessity of detaching troops from Washington to co-operate with the Army of the Potomac. This last reference, Bigelow tells us, probably referred to a previous plan of crossing below Fredericksburg, when apparently troops were to have been sent from Washington to Warrenton. If this is true, as there is every reason to believe, it shows how the Federal forces were working in watertight compartments. It would be thought that one of the chief recommendations of Hooker's plan lay in the possibility which it opened up of close co-operation between his and Heintzelman's forces; but this was evidently not considered and it was preferred that the troops at Washington should take no part in Hooker's operations.

In order to ensure the safety of his line of supply and to avoid delay, Hooker ordered 1,500,000 rations (ten days' supply) on board lighters, ready to be towed round from Aquia Creek.

The President approved the plan on April 12, adding: "The thing you dispense with would have been ready by midday to-morrow"; this referred



to Heintzelman's detachment of 18,000 men, who were to have moved to Warrenton. Why Hooker should have dispensed with this co-operation so light-heartedly it is difficult to understand—possibly friction with Halleck may have been at the bottom of it. On the same day (April 12) General Peck telegraphed from Suffolk to say that Longstreet with 30,000 men was attacking him; Hood's, Pickett's, and Anderson's Divisions were particularly mentioned. Both Peck and Keyes asked that Hooker should send reinforcements; Keyes saying: "As most of the enemy are from the Rappahannock, my present impression is that Hooker should send two Divisions here at once!!" This, at any rate, must have fairly well satisfied Hooker that Longstreet was not with Lee, and the obvious question was, would Longstreet be able to crush Peck and return in time to oppose Hooker? The answer to this depended on many things, of which the one in Hooker's control was time—that is to say the sooner Hooker advanced the less time would Longstreet have. As far as I can ascertain, this aspect of the problem did not occur to Hooker; although naturally it was obvious enough to Peck, who was anxious that Longstreet should cease his attacks. If Stonewall Jackson had been in Peck's place we may be sure that his main object would have been to prevent Longstreet from reinforcing Lee; and we may be equally sure if he had been

in Longstreet's place he would have done his best to be present at the decisive battle.

It is interesting to compare Longstreet's situation with that of Jackson in the Valley. Jackson by acting boldly obliged the Federals to detach men from in front of Lee, and at the right moment Jackson himself joined Lee. Longstreet did neither.

The characters of the two men were totally different. Although Longstreet was a fine fighting soldier and in many respects an exceptionally able Commander, there are indications throughout his career that he was apt to play for his own hand. Also the situations were by no means identical: Jackson was threatening a really sensitive spot, *i.e.* Maryland and Northern territory; but now Longstreet was doing nothing of the kind, his threat left the Federal Government cold—except for such anxiety as is always felt for victory in the field. There was little or no chance of Hooker being ordered to detach troops to support Peck, no matter how urgently the latter might ask for help. In fact, the boot was on the other leg, for Longstreet repeatedly asked Lee to send reinforcements to him.

Just consider this. There is much strategy to be learnt from it.

Hooker's principal step towards preparing for an early move was the issue of a circular to Corps Commanders on *April* 13.

The troops were to have *in their knapsacks* :

5 days' rations of hard bread, coffee, sugar,  
and salt,

and to carry *in their haversacks* :

3 days' rations of hard bread, coffee and sugar,  
3 days' rations of pork or bacon.

Each Corps was to have *on the hoof*:

5 days' fresh beef.

That is to say the men were to carry on the person 8 days' rations (less 5 days' meat on the hoof).

Each officer, with the help of his servant and his haversack, was to provide himself with 8 days' rations.

*Ammunition :*

60 rounds to be carried on the man .

20     ,,     ,,     ,,     on pack mules

60     ,,     ,,     ,,     in wagon train

---

140 rounds

At first Hooker ordered 150 rounds to be carried, but this was altered later to 140.

*Clothing :*

Each man was to carry 1 extra shirt

       ,,         ,,         1     ,,     pair of socks

       ,,         ,,         1     ,,         ,,     drawers.

Two pack mules were allowed to each regiment

to carry the officers' shelter tents, besides two wool blankets and one rubber blanket (water-proof sheet) per officer.

It will be seen that the Federal soldier was expected to carry a heavy load. In addition to what has just been mentioned, the men carried an overcoat and a blanket. According to the Official Records the weight varied between 35 and 45 lb. This, as Bigelow points out, did not, however, include such things as tobacco, Bible, pack of cards, and note book—the soldier's little luxuries—nor did it include the water bottle.

Most authorities agree that the total weight came to somewhere about 60 lb.

As far as I can ascertain from the different reports in the Official Records, the following is approximately correct:—

<i>Knapsack :</i>	lb.	lb.
With 5 days' ration. . . . .	6	} 14 $\frac{3}{4}$
Blanket . . . . .	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	
Extra clothing (say) . . . . .	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Overcoat . . . . .		5 $\frac{1}{4}$
Haversack (with 3 days' ration) . . . . .		6
Half shelter tent . . . . .		1 $\frac{3}{4}$
Rifle (say) . . . . .		11
Equipment (say) . . . . .		5
60 rounds . . . . .		6
Water bottle . . . . .		3 $\frac{1}{2}$
		<hr/> 53 $\frac{1}{4}$

The above does not include the weight of the clothing worn by the man.

The British soldier in full marching order carries about 59 lb., but  $14\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of this is the clothing he is actually wearing, which makes the additional weight carried about  $44\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

Hooker was therefore asking his men to carry considerably more than we expect of the British soldier of to-day.

The Federals had carried on previous occasions five days' rations on the men, but never more.

The above figures may at first sight appear to be uninteresting details; but such is not really the case, as we cannot ignore the fact that the whole art of war hinges to a great extent upon this question of carrying the soldiers' necessities—food, ammunition, and clothing. It appears that we want a soldier who will carry a lumping great load and march and fight with it on his back—or we must discover a human being who will exist without food. We are never likely to be successful in our search—the British soldier certainly shows no signs of developing into such an ideal specimen. We must, therefore, make the soldier carry as much as he can, but if we try to overload him, we shall only be laying up great trouble for the future. The whole question is naturally bound up closely with supply and transport, a subject to which our Army is paying full attention. The more

we study the movements of large Armies in the field, the more we realise the extent to which supply and transport affect strategy. The Army which finds the best solution of the problem will have an enormous advantage when it comes to war: it will have superior mobility, in itself about the greatest asset an Army can possess; and its Commander will not be harassed by constant apprehensions as regards feeding and supplying his troops.

To return to our subject, it may as well be mentioned at once that the American soldier was unable (and unwilling) to carry the load that Hooker expected. Writing on this subject we find one Federal officer referring to it "as that impossible order." All through the operations that followed we find constant reference to the soldiers throwing away their blankets and knapsacks, and in many cases leaving the rations on the ground. The Q.M.G. (General Ingalls) says in his report that 25 per cent. of the knapsacks were lost, thrown away in the action or on the march. The XI and XII Corps lost about 50 per cent. The Confederate soldiers much appreciated these discarded loads.

*The Cavalry Corps* was also expected to carry heavy weights, *i.e.* :

3 days' rations

3 „ short forage (*i.e.* grain)

40 rounds carbine ammunition  
20 „ pistol ammunition  
Carbine  
Pistol  
Sabre

Add to this the weight of the trooper, and it was estimated that the average load of the horse came to 270 lb. = 19 stone, 4 pounds! Needless to say the horse was overloaded.

Having issued these orders on April 13, and no doubt thinking that the supply difficulty had been overcome by the mere issue of the Order, Hooker then gave his instructions to his Cavalry Commander, Stoneman.

The Order was long, and as is usual with long orders, it was none too clear.

The following is a summary :—

The Cavalry Corps (less one Brigade) was to march at 7 a.m. on the 13th and was to cross the Rappahannock west of O. and A. railway (see Map No. 1). The Order continued: "In the vicinity of Culpeper you will be likely to come against F. Lee's Cavalry Brigade, about 2,000 men; which it is expected you will be able to disperse and destroy without delay to your advance or detriment to any considerable number of your command. At Gordonsville the enemy has a small provost guard which it is expected you will destroy, if it can be done



without delaying your forward movement. From there you will push on to the Aquia and Richmond Railway in the vicinity of Hanover Junction, destroying along your route railway bridges, trains, cars, depots, telegraph, etc.

“The primary object of your movement is the cutting of the enemy’s connection with Richmond by the Fredericksburg route. If the enemy retires by this route, which is more than probable, you will select the strongest positions so as to check or prevent it, and, if unsuccessful, you will fall upon his flank, attack his Artillery and trains, and harass and delay him until he is exhausted and out of supplies. If the enemy retires on Culpeper, you will endeavour to hold your force in his front and harass him night and day on the march and in camp unceasingly.

. . . . .

“You may rely upon the General (*i.e.* Hooker) being in connection with you before your supplies are exhausted. Let him hear from you as often as necessary and practicable.

“A Brigade of Infantry will march at 8 o’clock to-morrow for Kelly’s Ford, and one regiment and one Battery to the U.S. Ford to threaten and hold those places.”

It is proposed later on to deal separately with Stoneman’s operations. Attention might, however, be drawn to one or two points in these orders.

1. It was presumed that the enemy would retreat.
2. It was presumed that, if the enemy retreated, Stoneman would be able to hold them.
3. It was presumed that the main Army would be in connection with the Cavalry before the latter's supplies were exhausted.
4. It was presumed that Stoneman would be able to communicate with Hooker, and vice versa.

We shall see later whether Hooker was justified in making these assumptions, and also how urgently he required the services of his Cavalry on the battlefield.

I omitted to mention that Hooker suggested that Stoneman should give out that he was in pursuit of W. E. Jones' guerillas, who were operating extensively in the Shenandoah Valley, in the direction of Winchester. This part of the scheme succeeded. The Confederates were certainly at first under the impression that the Cavalry were going to cross into the Shenandoah.

Hooker, in order to spread this false report, also sent a circular order to the XII and III Corps to tell them that a large portion of the Cavalry had gone in the direction of the Shenandoah and would be absent some days. The Infantry picquets were to be vigilant and strong in the absence of the Cavalry.

In order to keep the move secret, the Postmaster at Washington was requested to detain the Army mails for 24 hours. Apparently such requests were frequently made and complied with.

A little incident which took place at this time (April 13) shows us the relations between Hooker and Halleck.

Hooker wrote to Halleck saying that the Cavalry were required for a special mission, and that if it was deemed of importance to keep open the telegraph communication between Dumfries and Washington,<sup>1</sup> a regiment of Cavalry should be sent from Washington.

A reply came in an hour; it ran as follows:—

“I do not think that the safety of Washington depends upon the maintenance of communication with your Army, but I think it is your duty to maintain your communication with Washington, and to keep the War Department advised of all your movements and intended movements. You, therefore, have my orders to keep up such communication.”

The small pettifogging mind of Halleck is clearly portrayed. Here we find no signs of a mind bent on a great purpose. It was one of those irritating little acts which are apt to end in want of co-operation. If the truth was known it is probable that Hooker felt far more animosity

<sup>1</sup> A duty which Hooker had previously carried out.

against his own chief than he did against the whole Southern Army combined.

It is with some satisfaction that we discover Hooker retaliated by sending the correspondence to Lincoln, who immediately replied: "General Heintzelman has ordered a regiment of Cavalry to scout south of Occaquan and Dumfries."

Stoneman moved off on the morning of April 13; and on April 15, Hooker, being under the impression that Stoneman would cross the Rappahannock that morning, sent a telegram to that effect to Lincoln, adding: "Up to date last night the enemy appeared to have no suspicions of our designs. This morning I can see nothing from the storm. I am rejoiced that Stoneman had two good days to go up the river and was enabled to cross it before it became too much swollen."

But the unexpected was to occur, and it shows us that we should take the weather into consideration when making plans. As far as in us lies we should always try to leave a safety margin in all our plans: the success of our operations should not depend upon everything working out exactly as we hope.

Shortly after Hooker had sent the above telegram to Lincoln, his hopes were dashed to the ground; a message arrived to say that the Cavalry had not crossed, owing to the swollen state of the river. Stoneman was immediately told to cross as soon as ever he could, and that the whole

Army was waiting on his movement. If the Artillery was an encumbrance he was to send it back.

Lincoln, on being informed, sent the following characteristic reply :—

"*April* 15. It is now 10.15 p.m. An hour ago I received your letter of this morning and a few minutes later your dispatch of this evening. The latter gives me considerable uneasiness. The rain and mud were of course to be calculated upon. General Stoneman is not moving rapidly enough to make the expedition come to anything. He has now been out three days,<sup>1</sup> two of which were unusually fair weather, and all three without hindrance from the enemy, and yet he is not 25 miles from where he started. To reach his point he has still 60 miles to go, another river (the Rapidan) to cross, and will be hindered by the enemy. By arithmetic, how many days will it take him to do it? I do not know that any better can be done, but I greatly fear it is another failure already. Write me often; I am very anxious."

Like all Lincoln's letters, this allows us to look into the heart of the man. No wonder he was anxious.

What had happened was this. The Cavalry had arrived at Bealeton on the 14th, off-loaded its wagons, and started loading up its pack

<sup>1</sup> Stoneman only moved on the morning of the 13th.

mules. One Brigade (Davis') made a wide turning movement, crossed at Sulphur Springs (10 miles above Rappahannock Station), and then moved down stream. Another brigade made a demonstration at Kelly's Ford which drew the enemy's Cavalry in that direction. The bulk of the Cavalry was to cross at Rappahannock Bridge as soon as Davis could co-operate. The main body endeavoured to cross without waiting for Davis' co-operation, but the enemy had a small post at the far end of the bridge, which showed no signs of being bluffed out of its position; so this attempt was given up and the troops went into camp intending to force the passage in the morning, as soon as Davis had cleared the way for them.

But here the Fates intervened. It began to rain at 2 a.m. on the 15th—heavy, solid rain. The river rose and the fords became impassable. Davis was recalled and only just recrossed the river in time, some of his horses having to swim.

It seems curious that Stoneman did not at any rate capture the Rappahannock Bridge. Davis was already across the river, and, what with Artillery with the main body and a determined effort, the passage should have been gained. Further progress might certainly have been barred by the Rapidan, but Stoneman's correct course should surely have been to advance as rapidly

as he could, and at any rate make an effort to seize the Rapidan railway bridge. He had nothing to fear from the enemy, who were not in sufficient strength to oppose a determined effort. There seems to have been a sad want of dash and determination, not so much on the part of the Federal soldiers as on that of their commander—Stoneman.

In order to deceive Lee and prevent him from interfering with Stoneman's passage of the river, the Potomac flotilla made a demonstration up the Rappahannock on the 15th; but as the commander came to the conclusion that the enemy was in strong force and had heavy batteries between Port Royal and Fredericksburg, the gunboats did not proceed far up the river.

By this time, the rank and file of both Armies were fully aware that Hooker was about to move, but neither the Federals nor the Confederates knew in which direction. It must be understood that a considerable amount of gossip habitually passed between the opposing picquets. Apparently quite a brisk trade was carried on: Northern coffee was bartered for Southern tobacco, and newspapers were frequently exchanged.

Bigelow mentions that on the 14th, a Confederate picquet shouted across the river: "You need not be so still there, we know all about it; you have got orders to move."

Hooker was naturally somewhat annoyed when



he discovered that the following conversation had been exchanged on the 15th :—

*Confederate* : Any signs of a move ?

*Federal* : Yes. We have got 8 days' rations and expect to move in a few days. We have 3 days' rations in our haversacks and 5 in our knapsacks.

*Confederate* : Where is the move to be ?

*Federal* : Up to the right.

Only a few days later, Hooker received another shock. The Washington *Daily Chronicle* published a copy of a Medical report on Hooker's Army, which practically gave full details of the strength and composition of the Army. As Hooker told the Secretary for War the Chief of the Secret Service would willingly have paid 1000 dollars for such information as regards the enemy.

It must have been small consolation to Hooker when the Surgeon-General of the Army wrote by way of excuse that a certain Dr. Smith (in his Department) had given the information to a reporter, but that the said Dr. Smith was actuated by no improper motives, and it was only inadvertence to which the best of us are liable. As it was the first error, the Surgeon-General hoped that the matter would be overlooked.

Such incidents must have been maddening, but it was only to be expected from a nation, from an Army, and from individuals, who were utterly

ignorant of war. What would happen in England under like circumstances ?

The rain continued steadily for nearly two weeks. The river rose, we are told, some 12 feet; the roads and the country generally were in a fearful state.

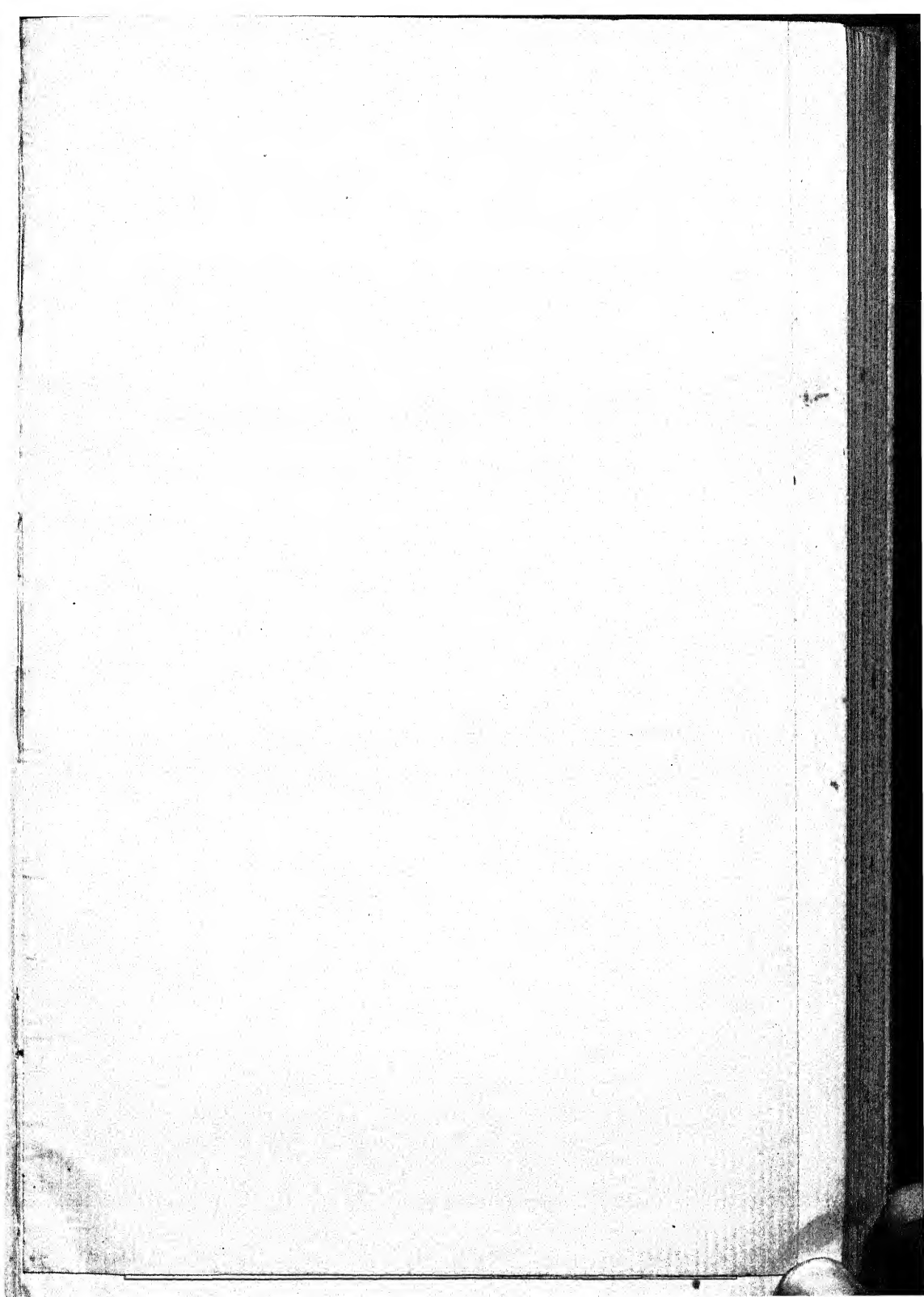
Stoneman kept his men in the neighbourhood of Warrenton Junction—with picquets well out. The effect of this on Lee was curious; it completely deceived him as to Hooker's intentions. On April 18 he wrote to Stuart: "It appears to me that he (Hooker) is rather fearful of an attack from us than preparing to attack. His operations in front of you look rather to prevent your moving against his right or getting in his rear."

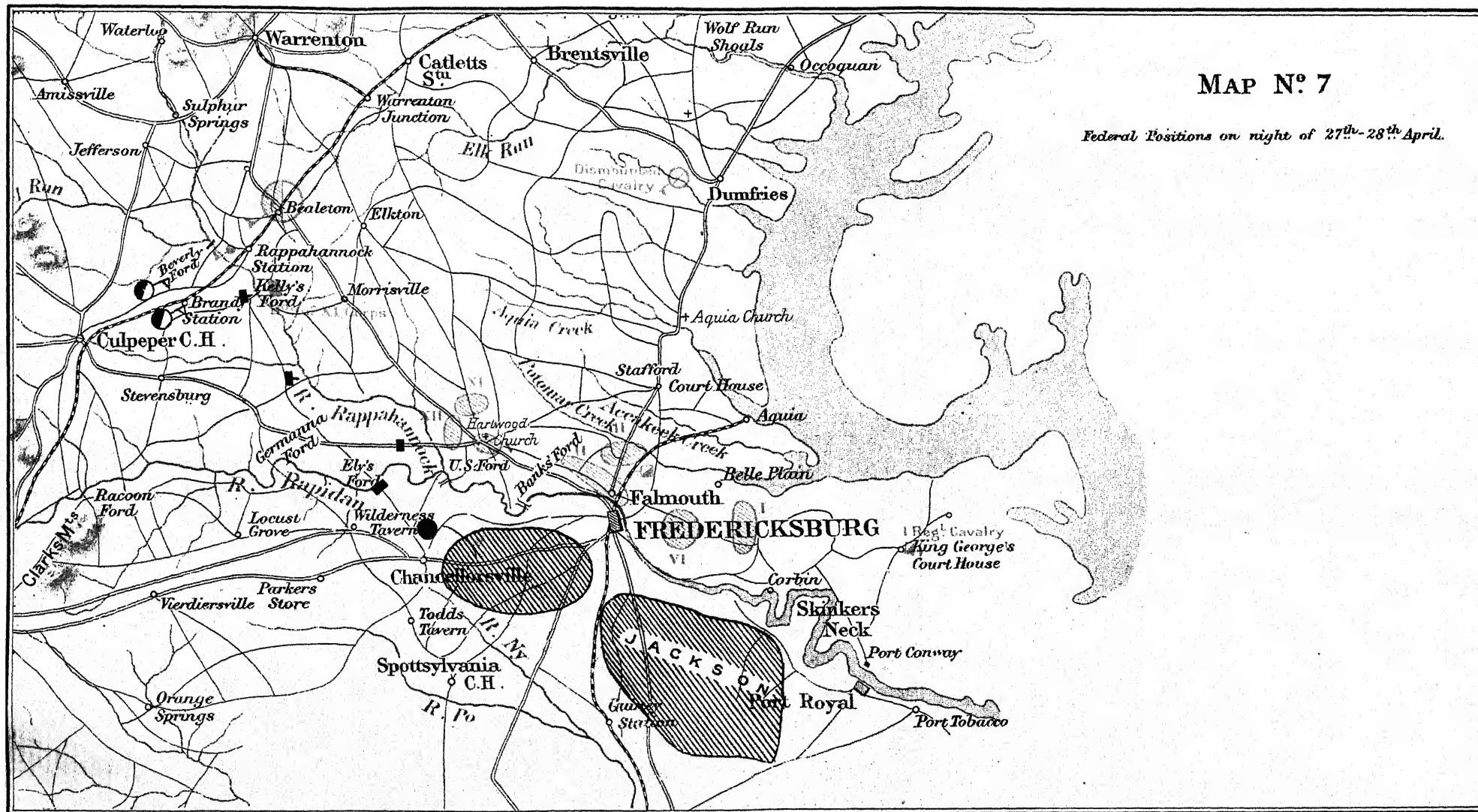
By this time Hooker seems to have been aware that the enemy had two Cavalry Brigades which he estimated at 4000 to 5000, in front of Stoneman.

As a matter of fact this information was fairly accurate: there were two Brigades (*i.e.* W. Lee at Sperryville and F. Lee about Culpeper); their total strength, however, was not more than 3000.

General Peck, at Suffolk, continued to report that he held his own with Longstreet.

On the 22nd another demonstration was made at Port Royal; a small detachment was sent across in boats meeting with no opposition, a few prisoners were captured.





# MAP N° 7

Federal Positions on night of 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April.

On the 25th, the weather cleared and the roads began to dry up rapidly.

About this date the first rumours began to come in of a Confederate advance against the Baltimore and Ohio Railway west of Harper's Ferry. Every day, or rather every hour, reports were arriving at Washington, most of them showing that the writers were in a state of panic. The only man who seems to have kept his head was Lincoln. This raid only indirectly affects our story: it was undertaken by Imboden and Jones from the Shenandoah with the idea of breaking up the Baltimore and Ohio Railway and creating a diversion, and at the same time it was hoped to get in supplies, horses, and recruits.

Lincoln quite realised that it would be a mistake to withdraw troops from Hooker, and he made no attempt to do so.

On April 26 Hooker decided on his plan to meet the new conditions. His idea now was to try and destroy Lee's Army.

A sufficient force of Infantry was to be thrown across at Kelly's Ford; it was then to march down the right bank of the Rappahannock and drive away the enemy's forces, holding the U.S. and Bank's Fords. As soon as the fords were open the column was to be reinforced sufficiently to enable it to continue its advance, with the object of striking a decisive blow against the left flank of the Confederate Army.

Simultaneously with this movement on the right, the left wing was to cross the Rappahannock below Fredericksburg, threaten the enemy in that quarter, including his depots of supplies (which were mostly at Guiney Station and along the railway) and prevent his dispatching an overwhelming force against Hooker's right wing.

During this day (26th), Peck reported that Longstreet was still about Suffolk, and heavy artillery was reported to be coming up to Longstreet from Petersburg. If true, this information about the heavy artillery was significant, as it indicated that Longstreet had resigned himself to a longish stay in front of Suffolk. Comforting news for Hooker.

The following gives a summary of Hooker's Orders to carry out the intentions outlined above :—

*The XI and XII Corps* will march at sunrise to-morrow (27th) in the order named. The former will encamp as near Kelly's Ford as practicable, without discovering itself to the enemy ; and the latter (XII Corps) will encamp in rear of the XI Corps.

Camps to be established on or before 4 p.m. 28th.

Corps Commander to be responsible that the men are kept in camp and do not approach the river.

*The V Corps* to reach the vicinity of Kelly's Ford by 4 p.m. 28th. The XI and XII Corps will be on the same route from Hartwood,



*The II Corps* to move at sunrise, 28th.

Two Divisions (less 1 Brigade and 1 Battery)  
to camp near Bank's Ford under cover.

One Brigade and one Battery to take position  
at U.S. Ford.

One Division (the one whose camp is exposed  
to view) is to remain in camp, *i.e.*  
opposite Fredericksburg, and picquet the  
river.

All the Corps to be in readiness to follow up  
any successful movements without delay.

*The I, III, and VI Corps* will be in position  
ready to cross the river by 3:30 a.m. on the  
29th.

The VI Corps at Franklin's Crossing.

The I Corps at Fitzhugh's Crossing (1½ miles  
below Franklin's Crossing).

The III Corps as a support, ready to re-  
inforce either the I or VI Corps.

*The Cavalry.* Pleasanton, who was left in  
command of Devins' Cavalry Brigade and one  
extra regiment, was ordered to report to Slocum  
(right wing) for orders. The idea being that  
part of the Cavalry were to accompany the XI  
and XII via Germanna Ford, and a part to ac-  
company the V via Ely's Ford. Hooker's further  
plans for the 29th were :



*The Right Wing* under Slocum (the senior Corps Commander) was to cross at Kelly's Ford, and advance on Chancellorsville. The XI and XII via Germanna Ford. The V via Ely's Ford.

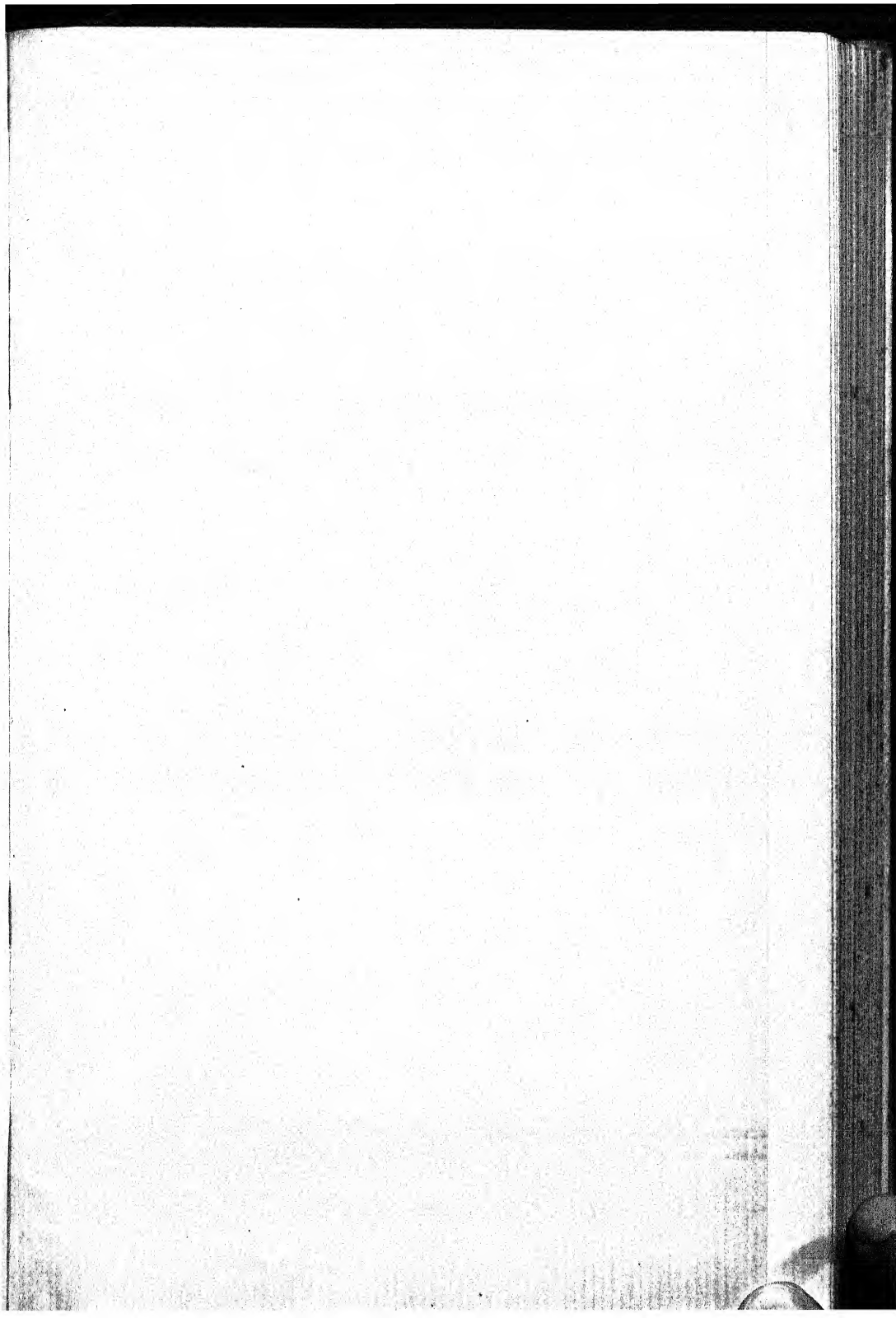
*The Left Wing* (under Sedgwick) was to make a demonstration in full force on the morning of the 29th.

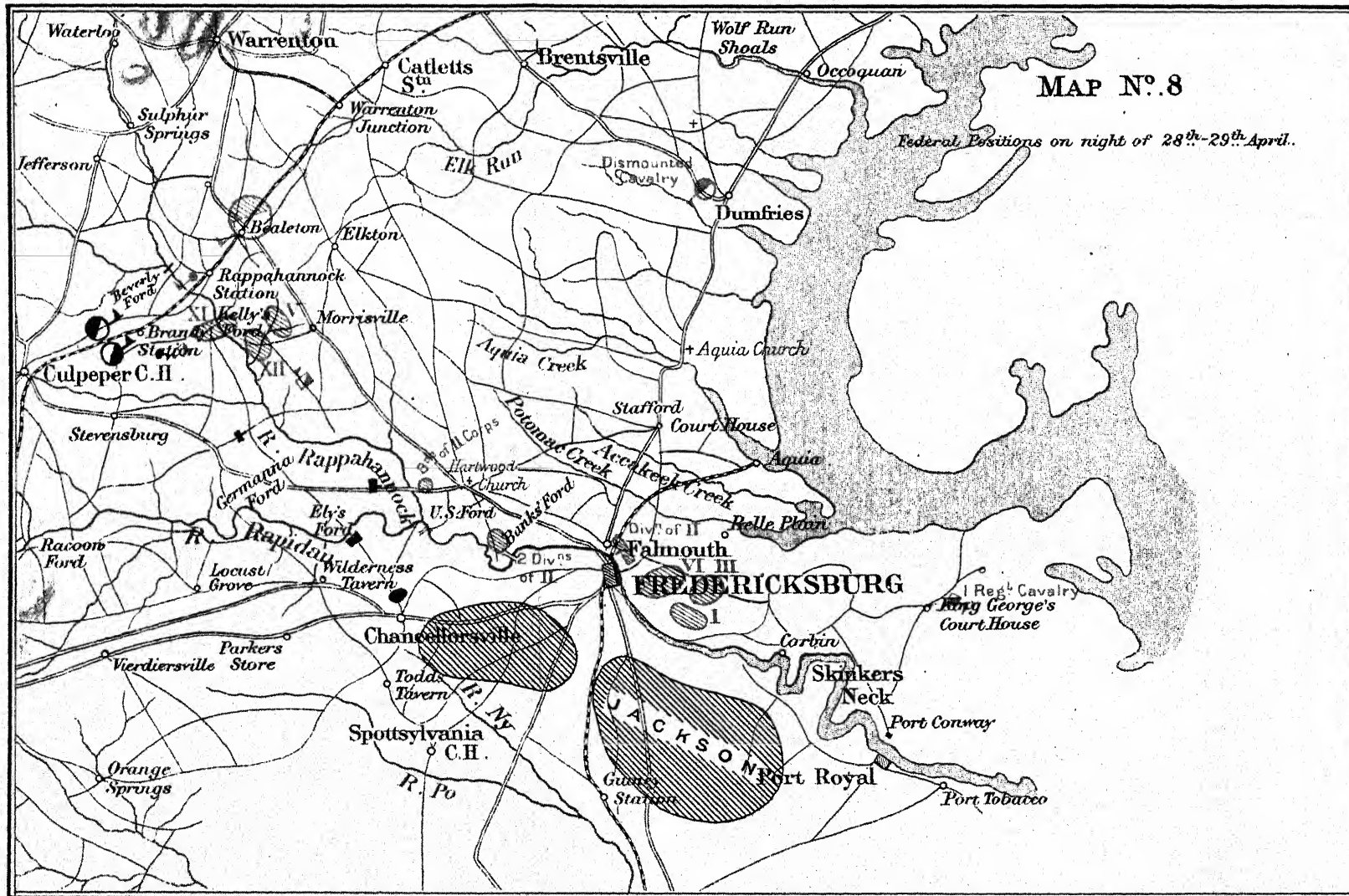
*The II Corps* (less one Division) was to cross at the U.S. Ford, as soon as it had been cleared by the advance of the Right Wing. It was then to join hands with the Right Wing, thus making the latter up to a strength of four Corps.

*The Cavalry under Stoneman* were to carry out their original programme, with certain modifications. Stoneman's instructions came to this:

His force was to cross the Rappahannock between Rappahannock Station and Kelly's Ford (both inclusive), to be across by 8 a.m. 29th; a large detachment was to deal with the enemy's Cavalry believed to be about Culpeper and Rapidan Station. The remainder, under cover of the above detachment, was to proceed via Racoon Ford and carry out the main task of destroying the Fredericksburg and Richmond railway and cutting off the enemy's retreat.

Stoneman was further directed to fix on some point for reuniting his force, so that the Cavalry would be in full strength for carrying out its main task.





As usual the orders issued to the Cavalry were verbose and difficult to understand.

The Federal Army was set in motion in accordance with the above instructions, the enemy in no way interfering with the operations. Maps Nos. 7 and 8, respectively, show the positions the troops had reached on the evening of the 27th and 28th.

## CHAPTER VI

It is proposed to give a summary of the Instructions issued to the Right and Left Wings; they are of considerable interest.

Sedgwick, who was in command of the Left Wing, was told to make a demonstration in full force on the morning of the 29th, with a view to securing the telegraph road and barring that route to Richmond. *In the event* of the enemy detaching any considerable part of his force against the troops operating towards Chancellorsville, Sedgwick was to attack *at all hazards*.<sup>1</sup>

Slocum, who was in command of the Right Wing, was told that the XI Corps was to cross at Kelly's Ford during the night of 28th/29th.

The XII Corps was to commence crossing at daylight on the 29th.

Both Corps were to march as rapidly as possible and seize the bridge<sup>2</sup> (if standing) and ford at Germanna.

The V Corps was to cross the Rapidan at Ely's Ford.

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J. G.

<sup>2</sup> The Confederates were known to be building this bridge.

The three Corps were to continue the march to Chancellorsville. The following extract from the Orders to Slocum will perhaps assist the reader to follow Hooker's intentions:—

"The enemy have a Brigade at the U.S. Ford which they will have to abandon, this will open the U.S. Ford to us, when bridges will at once be thrown . . . If your Cavalry is well advanced from Chancellorsville, *you will be able* to ascertain whether or not the enemy is detaching forces from behind Fredericksburg to resist your advance. *If not in any considerable force*, the General desires that you will endeavour to advance *at all hazards*, securing a position on the Plank Road and uncovering Bank's Ford.

"*If the enemy should be greatly reinforced* you will then select a strong position and *compel him to attack you* on your own ground. Two A.D.C.'s are sent to report to you for communicating with the General. The General desires that not a moment will be lost until our troops are established at or near Chancellorsville. From that moment *all will be ours.*"<sup>1</sup>

Hooker's orders should be studied closely, as everything that occurred later hinged on them. Officers, who desire to work out an interesting problem in Staff duties, could not do better than study the situation and then actually write the orders which they think should have been issued.

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J. G.

The campaign of Chancellorsville affords a good example of an attempt to envelop an enemy with two converging forces; history shows us that under these circumstances both columns should advance boldly and attack with vigour; any other course is dangerous in the extreme. British Officers must be prepared to meet an enveloping attack; in the present state of Europe it seems probable that the Germans may be our next enemy and everything points to the probability of their employing enveloping tactics. Whether they will do so by simply extending their flanks on the battlefield—as at Woerth and Gravelotte, or whether they will endeavour to close in by uniting two or more columns on the battlefield—as at Sadowa, will depend upon circumstances. But the main point to bear in mind is that we must expect something of this sort, and in all our work as soldiers we should take particular note of German tendencies, methods, principles, or doctrines, call them what we may. It is for these reasons that we should study such battles as Chancellorsville and Sadowa, as they will help us to form an opinion as to the best method of meeting such attacks.

At Chancellorsville we shall see how Lee dealt with the situation, and how Hooker allowed his forces to be beaten in detail by failing to assume a vigorous offensive.

At Sadowa, Benedek sat still awaiting attack,



passively allowing his enemy to close in on him, with the inevitable result. The Prussians, unlike the Federals at Chancellorsville, attacked vigorously and kept up a relentless pressure; we find no orders to take up "positions" *if* the enemy appear strong.

We should *think* over these things. Say Lee had been in command of the Austrians instead of Benedek, would he not have hit out? and if he had, what might have been the result? Or, say Benedek had commanded the Confederates at Chancellorsville, would he have sat still? and if he had, would not the result have been a great success for Hooker?

At the actions of Port Republic and Cross Keys we find Jackson applying just the same principles as Lee at Chancellorsville; he struck first against one enemy and then against another, while at the same time making full use of the river which divided his enemy.

It is only by close study of such examples that we can hope to learn how to apply successfully the well-known principles of war. There is no difficulty in learning the principles themselves, but it is the application which is difficult. On paper it seems easy for the force in the centre to hit out; but in war, when the enemy's movements are wrapped in obscurity, it requires an exceptional Commander to judge correctly the right moment for launching the blow, the

tendency is to delay striking until it is too late.

To return to Hooker's instructions. Sedgwick was told to attack *at all hazards, in the event* of the enemy detaching any considerable force against the Right Wing. The whole wording of the Order breathes indecision. It almost invariably happens that a Commander is firmly convinced the enemy's main strength is in front of him, and that they are weak elsewhere. It was a practical certainty that Sedgwick would consider that the enemy had not detached, and consequently the probability of his advancing "at all hazards" was more than doubtful. Also it is scarcely advisable to expect a subordinate to advance at all hazards unless he is ordered definitely to attack. As soon as the "advance at all hazards" is qualified by "ifs" and "provided thats" we may be sure that the "ifs" and "provided thats" will loom large, while the "advance at all hazards" will be ignored.

Not only was the Order a bad one for these reasons, but it was bound to follow that the control of the battle would, at the very commencement of the operations, pass from Hooker's hands into those of his subordinate Commanders. A state of affairs that a Commander-in-Chief should do his best to avoid as long as possible.

The Orders to Slocum, like those to Sedgwick, said that an advance was to be made "at all

hazards," but this was only to be done provided the enemy was not in considerable force. Needless to say, neither the Right nor Left Wings advanced when the moment for action arrived.

Slocum was told that if he advanced his Cavalry well to the front, he would be able to discover whether the enemy was detaching troops from behind Fredericksburg. This is the sort of order that appears all right on paper, but which in practice and when bullets are in the air is so difficult to carry out. The Cavalry were not strong enough to advance, and the fault lies with Hooker, who sent almost all his Cavalry under Stoneman on a wild-goose mission round the enemy's rear. The only Cavalry left with the Army consisted of one Brigade, say, 1,200 strong:

6th New York Cavalry	.	267 strong.
8th Pennsylvania „	.	350 „
17th „ „	.	500 „
One Battery Artillery.		

The 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry was also on the extreme left flank of the whole Army.

Small as was the Cavalry force, Hooker did not even get full value from it, as he split up the Cavalry Brigade, each regiment acting independently with the XI, XII, and V Corps respectively.

Slocum was ordered, in the event of the enemy being strongly reinforced, to take up a strong position and compel the enemy to attack him

(Slocum). Here we find the first indications of real weakness on the part of Hooker. As he nears the enemy the dominant idea seems to be to guard himself rather than to attack. We shall see this tendency becoming more and more pronounced as the time for action arrives.

Apart from the fact that it was, under the circumstances, a fatal error to think of taking up positions, how did Hooker imagine that Slocum was going to compel the enemy to attack? There was only one way to do this, and that was to take up a position which would bar the enemy's retreat both to Gordonsville and to Richmond. Any position which did not bar these lines of retreat must have left it optional to the enemy to attack or not, as he thought fit.

It is a very common error to think the enemy must attack if we take up a position; but it by no means follows that he will do anything of the sort.

Hooker issued no sort of combined order; separate instructions were issued to Slocum, Couch, and Sedgwick. Slocum did not know what Sedgwick was to do, and vice-versa. At the last moment Hooker took Couch into his confidence. He did this, however, because Couch was the next senior General, and not because he wished to ensure co-operation.

As a general rule, it is wise to issue a combined order: it is the best method of ensuring co-

operation. In war we find that secrecy and co-operation are frequently bad bed-fellows, but history shows us that more battles have been lost owing to want of co-operation than from almost any other cause. Chancellorsville is a good example of this. In order to learn how to handle an Army in the field, study the methods of men like Lee. Lee took his principal subordinates into his confidence; he knew them, and they knew him; they worked well together for that reason.

Not long ago I was talking to an officer, whose opinion I value more than that of any one I know; he said he was convinced that in order to fight a successful battle, under modern conditions, it was essential for the C.-in-C. to have two or more subordinate generals, who thoroughly understood what he wanted done, and who not only knew his intentions and understood his methods of action, but also realised the importance of co-operation one with another. The C.-in-C., having explained his intentions and launched his troops to the attack, could really do very little except by retaining a force under his own control, and by keeping his subordinates informed of the progress of the fight, *thus doing his best to ensure co-operation.*

Surely these principles, if properly applied, contain the secret of success in war. It is essential that the C.-in-C. and his subordinates should understand one another; they should form

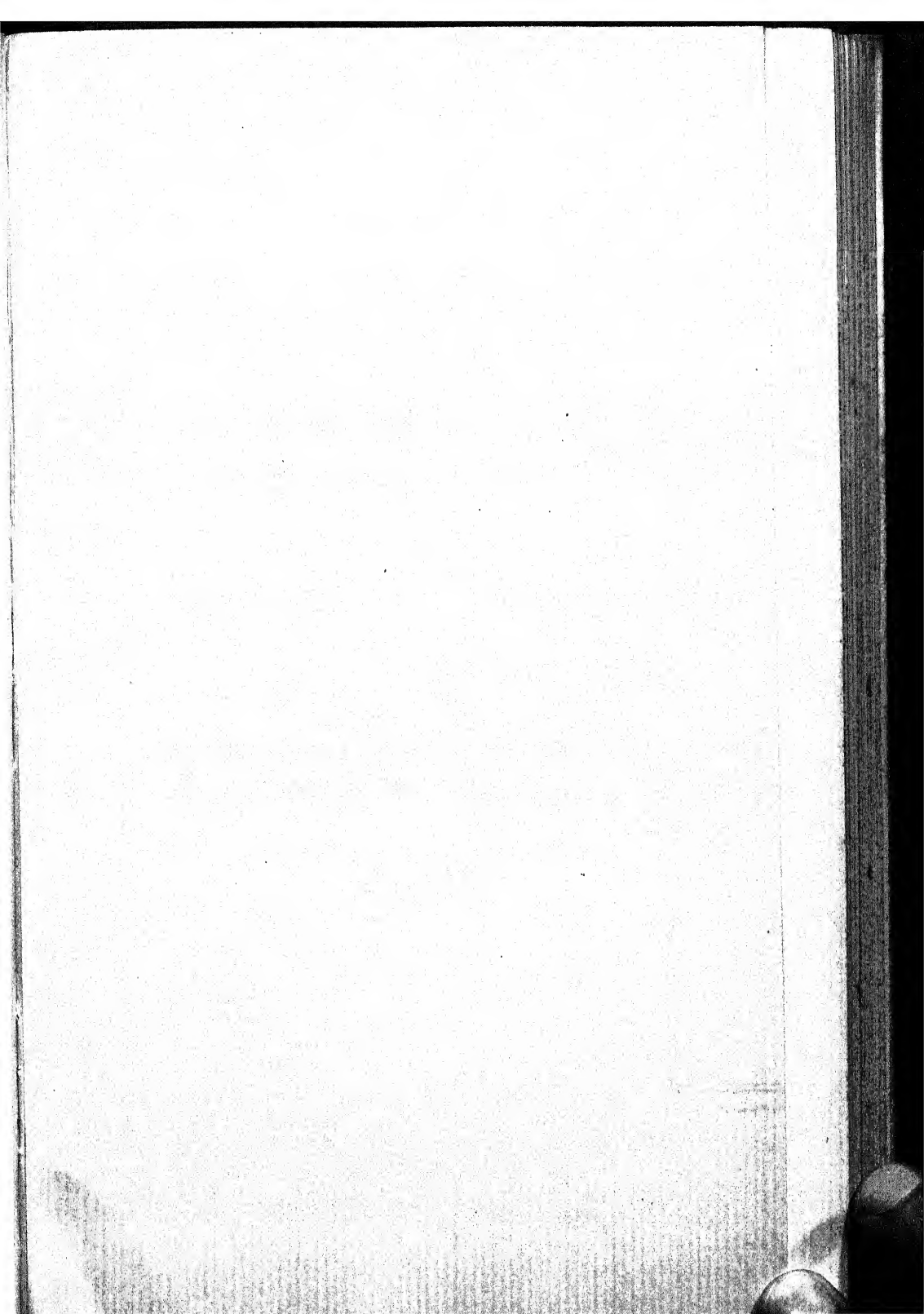
a team, or, better still, a band of brothers, each member of which should understand the methods of the others. Much can be done in peace to ensure this. We should strive to arrive at a state of affairs when each member of the team, regardless of personal advancement, should have one ambition only—to ensure the victory for his country. A soldier should be as pleased to see his neighbour receiving praise as he would be to receive it himself: it should be sufficient reward to feel that he had done his duty and pulled his weight for the common good.

Hooker kept his plans so secret that he never even told his Chief Signal Officer what might be required of him; he simply ordered certain signal posts to be established. As a result, when the telegraph line had to be extended to the U.S. Ford, some old telegraph wire had to be used, and the consequent delay in the communications caused considerable trouble.

All the Corps crossing the river were ordered to march as light as possible; the only wagons to accompany the troops were to carry ammunition and forage. The average number of wagons with each Corps came to thirty, except the XI Corps, who had fifty-eight.<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the Corps Trains were parked on the northern bank of the river, close to the camps of their respective Corps.

In order to assist the Right Wing in crossing

<sup>1</sup> "The Campaign of Chancellorsville," p. 175.







at Kelly's Ford a special pontoon train had been sent down from Washington to Bealeton Station, where it arrived on the afternoon of the 28th. It was met there by wagons, taken to Kelly's Ford, and laid by about 9 p.m. that evening.

The XI Corps cleared the enemy away from the far side of the ford by crossing some 400 men in boats below the ford (see Map No. 9). The XI Corps, headed by the 17th Pa. Cavalry, commenced crossing at 10 p.m., and took up a defensive position to cover the bridge; it had cleared the bridge a little before daylight (29th).

*April 29.*—The XII Corps then crossed and marched straight on Germanna Ford, followed by the XI Corps.

The V Corps followed the XII across the bridge. It commenced crossing about 10.30 a.m. (29th) and took the road for Ely's Ford.

Hooker, who had taken up his headquarters at Morrisville, superintended the movement.

The enemy's Cavalry were encountered on the march, and a certain amount of bickering took place on the right flank of the XI and XII Corps. The advanced guard arrived at Germanna Ford about 12 noon; they were lucky enough to find a boat, and were thus able to send some men across below the ford, who surprised most of the enemy's picquet.

The XII Corps left one Division at Kelly's Ford to form the rear-guard; it was considerably

delayed owing to the arrival of Stoneman's Cavalry Corps, many of whom made use of the bridge, as the river was still so swollen that the fords were dangerous. The result was that Stoneman's Cavalry, instead of crossing the river ahead of the Infantry Columns, crossed rather behind them.<sup>1</sup>

If he had so desired, Hooker could even now, at the eleventh hour, have kept his Cavalry with him. It would have been easy enough to have ordered them to operate on the right flank of the Right Wing, while Pleasanton's Cavalry could have covered the advance.

By 11 p.m., 29th, the situation was this :

*The XII Corps* had just waded across the ford at Germanna, and the men were in bivouacs on the far side ; fires had been lit, and clothes were being dried. The river was still high, the men having been up to their armpits when crossing the ford.

*The XI Corps* was just beginning to cross.

*The Rear-guard* of one Division XII Corps, having been delayed by the Cavalry, had just left Kelly's Ford, and bivouacked on the road about 3 a.m. (30th).

*The V Corps* had crossed at Ely's Ford, and bivouacked just beyond.

*The II Corps* had two Divisions in bivouac at

<sup>1</sup> The reasons for Stoneman's delay will be explained when the Cavalry operations are being discussed.

the U.S. Ford, the enemy being in possession of the far side of the ford. The pontoon train (for two bridges) was with the two Divisions, ready to be laid at any moment. A Company had been left at Bank's Ford with a few guns. The remaining Division (Gibbon) of the II Corps had not moved, and was in position opposite Fredericksburg.

*The Left Wing*, under Sedgwick, had succeeded in laying two pontoon bridges at each of the crossings (Franklin's and Fitzhugh's). The VI Corps at Franklin's Crossing had one Brigade across the river, guarding the bridges. The I Corps also had one Brigade across, covering the bridges at Fitzhugh's Crossing; the remainder of these two Corps being in readiness to cross. The III Corps was in reserve, ready to move round to join the Right Wing, or to support the I and VI Corps.

There had been considerable delay in getting across the river, at both Franklin's and Fitzhugh's Crossing, owing to difficulty in bringing the heavy pontoon-boats down to the river without giving the alarm to the enemy. The boats were to have been carried down by hand during the night by a fatigue party of sixty to seventy men per boat. There had been considerable friction between the Chief Engineer and the Divisional Generals, Benham (the C.E.) eventually getting so annoyed, that he placed one of the Generals under arrest;

but we are told that the latter took no notice of the order. These little incidents give us some idea of the state of discipline in the Federal Army.

The situation at this time is full of interest. Hooker's plans had so far worked out with wonderful success. His Right Wing had moved with a rapidity previously unknown in the Army of the Potomac. The passage of the two rivers had been accomplished with practically no loss. The enemy had undoubtedly been surprised. The Right and Left Wings were now only separated by fifteen or twenty miles, the enemy's force was somewhere between them.

If the enemy remained passive and allowed the two wings to close in, Hooker's manœuvres were bound to be crowned with success. The question was, what would the enemy do? Would he retire at once or would he attack one or other of the Wings? Had he time and space to concentrate against one Wing and beat it before the other Wing came up?

On paper it looked as though Lee was beat. Up to this, Hooker, with his accustomed confidence, had anticipated an easy victory. The enemy, he thought, would do as he expected. But now, as the moment for action approached, we find Hooker thinking less and less of making the enemy conform to his own movements and thinking more and more of making his own movements conform to those of the enemy. It is human nature.

During the day (29th) Hooker had received reports to the effect that Columns of the enemy 8,000 to 10,000 strong were moving at 3.30 p.m. from Hamilton's Crossing in the direction of Fredericksburg, and that the enemy in front of Sedgwick did not appear to be in strength.

These reports mostly came from Professor Lowe, the chief of aeronauts; they are dated from "Balloon in the Air." Apparently there were two balloons up, one near Sedgwick's headquarters and the other near Falmouth. It is often stated that these balloons proved of little value, but when one reads the official Records and sees the messages actually sent, I cannot altogether agree with this. Hooker received very fairly accurate information, much better than is usually the case in war. It must have been a curious experience for the Professor.

Hooker had taken a great deal of pains to ensure communication between his two wings. The Signal Corps had established telegraph lines from U.S. Ford to Sedgwick; while General Butterfield, the Chief of the Staff, remained near Falmouth to pass messages between Hooker and Sedgwick.

Hooker himself remained temporarily at Morrisville, with the intention of joining the Right Wing as soon as it arrived at Chancellorsville. As things turned out it would have been better if he had joined Butterfield and controlled the fight from there, issuing orders to the Right and Left



Wings. As it was, he joined the Right Wing and at the critical period of fighting was out of touch with Sedgwick.

On the evening of the 29th it looked as though the Confederate Cavalry under Stuart had been separated from Lee's main Army. It was known that the main force of the Confederate Cavalry was about Culpeper. During the 29th it had been in touch with the marching Column of the XI and XII Corps; it had drawn off in the evening—apparently towards Culpeper and Rapidan station.

The Right Wing was in possession of Germanna and Ely's Fords. Stoneman had bivouacked in two bodies: one, under Averell, near Kelly's Ford with orders to deal with the enemy about Culpeper and Rapidan; the other, under Stoneman, was at Madden (5 miles north-west of Germanna) with the object of pushing on rapidly via Racoon Ford. It hardly looked as though Stuart would be able to join Lee. But the Federal Cavalry took no steps to prevent it.

Take particular note of the Cavalry situation: it will be seen that the Cavalry were *behind* the Infantry, instead of in front. Stoneman's leisurely movements can hardly have been anticipated, but later, when we come to a consideration of Stoneman's operations it will be seen that Hooker's Staff arrangements were partly to blame for this state of affairs.



*April 30.*—*The V Corps* started early on the 30th on its march to Chancellorsville—covered by the 8th Pa. Cavalry.

The enemy's Cavalry skirmished with the advanced scouts, but by 8 a.m. the advanced guard arrived at Chancellorsville (see Map No. 9). The Cavalry came up with enemy's rear-guard on the Plank road about one mile beyond Chancellorsville, and were repulsed. The enemy then continued his retirement, being observed at a respectful distance by the Federal patrols.

By 1 p.m. two Divisions of the V Corps had arrived at Chancellorsville. The rear-guard of this Corps had had a trying time of it and, owing to the fatigue of the men, halted at Hunting Run for the night.

*The XI and XII Corps* left Germanna Ford about 6.30 a.m., the XII Corps leading. The advanced Cavalry were attacked by Confederate Cavalry near Wilderness Tavern (Pike road) but on the arrival of the Infantry the enemy had to fall back.

The head of the XII Corps arrived at Chancellorsville about 2 p.m. It had marched about 11 miles.

The V Corps, which arrived one hour previously, had only marched five miles (from Ely's Ford).

Everything was looking rosy. The Right and Left Wings were steadily approaching one another—they were now only eleven or twelve miles apart.

There was no further sign of the enemy as yet. It was known that a force of two Brigades had fallen back along the Plank road in front of V Corps.

But Slocum's hopes of continuing the advance were dashed to the ground on receipt of the following message:—

HEADQUARTERS, 2.15 P.M.

The General directs that no advance be made from Chancellorsville until the columns are concentrated. He expects to be at Chancellorsville to-night.

(Signed) DANIEL BUTTERFIELD.

The upshot of the matter was that the Right Wing bivouacked as shown on Map No. 9.

The XI Corps about Dowdall's Tavern (where the Pike and Plank roads meet).

The XII Corps to the South of the road and to the west of Chancellorsville.

The V Corps	{	2 Divisions at Chancellorsville.
		1 Division back on the Hunting Run.

The 8th Cavalry, who were covering Meade's (V Corps) advance, reported the enemy's line of battle astride the road just west of Zion Church. Two Brigades of Infantry had been sent to support the Cavalry, but on receipt of the orders to halt at Chancellorsville they were ordered back again; which retirement naturally enough threw the men into a state of gloom.

The 6th (New York) Cavalry had been sent off about 1 p.m. to Spottsylvania C. H. (about eight miles south of Chancellorsville). When the O. C. received his orders he remarked "a dusty job with results uncertain and perilous." As will be explained later this regiment had a curious encounter in the night with Stuart's Cavalry, who were trying to make their way back to join Lee.

The remaining Cavalry Regiment (17th P.A.) bivouacked on the Hunting Run in rear of the XI Corps, with picquets thrown out to their right flank.

*The II Corps* had crossed its two Divisions at the United States Ford, but not till 3.30 p.m.; the delay being caused by the bad state of the road near the river and the uncertainty as to whether the enemy were going to dispute the passage or not. The first regiment stepped gaily across the bridge at 3.30 p.m., headed by the band playing, "In Dixie land I'll take my stand."

The two Divisions went into bivouac three-quarters of a mile north of Chancellorsville on the U. S. Ford road—three regiments were left to hold the ford.

*The Left Wing.*—We will now see what had been happening to the Left Wing during the day (30th).

About 8.30 a.m., Hooker being naturally anxious to ascertain whether the enemy had weakened in

front of Sedgwick, sent the latter orders to make a demonstration to clear up the situation, but as usual the order was qualified by adding "the demonstration will not be made, if you are certain that the enemy is in full force in your front."

At 11.30 a.m. Sedgwick reported that he was satisfied that the enemy had not weakened, and the demonstration was not made.

Such passive behaviour was hardly likely to deceive Lee, and in any case nothing but a show of force could have prevented the enemy detaching troops.

At 12 noon, Hooker ordered Sedgwick to send the III Corps round to join the Right Wing, it was to move as far as possible concealed from view. The Corps moved in three columns at 1.30 p.m., and bivouacked for the night at Hamet, five miles short of the U.S. Ford, having only marched eleven miles at the outside.

At the same time, orders were sent to take up two bridges, one at Franklin and one at Fitzhugh Crossing, and take them round to Bank's Ford as soon as it was dark: the bridges to be ready for laying at Bank's Ford by daylight (1st).

Sedgwick was also told that Hooker with the Right Wing would advance the next morning along the Plank Road. He was told to observe the enemy closely; *if* he exposed a weak point to attack him in full force and destroy him.

In the meantime Sedgwick did nothing, he did not even reinforce the Brigades guarding the bridges.

During the afternoon Sedgwick reported that the enemy appeared to be passing troops towards Chancellorsville, and that the railroad appeared busy. He thought troops were coming up from Richmond. Butterfield's answer to this was:—"General Hooker hopes they are from Richmond, as the greater will be our success."

Hooker himself rode over to Chancellorsville in the evening and issued his famous congratulatory order, No. 47, which ran as follows:—

GENERAL ORDER, No. 47

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
CAMP NEAR FALMOUTH, VA.,  
*April 30, 1863.*

It is with heart-felt satisfaction the Commanding General announces to the Army that the operations of the last three days have determined that our enemy must either ingloriously fly or come out from behind his intrenchments and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him.

The operations of the V, XI, and XII Corps have been a succession of splendid achievements.

By order of Major-General Hooker.

S. WILLIAMS, A.A.G.

Up to this, apparently next to nothing had been heard of the Cavalry; Hooker knew that Stoneman had started, but the only report received was one from Averell at 11 p.m. to the effect that the enemy were under the impression that the Army of the Potomac was advancing behind Averell (*i.e.* towards Culpeper), and that Stonewall Jackson was at Gordonsville with 25,000 men! A curious piece of information, which Averell said he considered reliable and important.

During the day (30th) Dix telegraphed from Fortress Munroe to say that Suffolk was invested by a superior force and if the enemy attacked it might be a serious matter. He added "a successful movement on your (Hooker's) part would be of great service to us by preventing Longstreet from being further reinforced and may compel him to withdraw."<sup>1</sup>

Hooker wired back at 12.30 p.m.: "The enemy has need of every man here. He has his hands full. Rely on this. I can say no more."

The position of the Federals is shown on Map No. 9. According to a return dated April 30, the strength of Hooker's Army was:—

<sup>1</sup> Dix would have shown a more soldierly spirit if he had expressed a hope that he would be able to keep Longstreet engaged until Hooker had fought the really decisive battle.

*Right Wing*

II Corps (two Divisions)	11,000	
V „ . . . . .	15,500	
XI „ . . . . .	12,900	
XII „ . . . . .	13,440	
Pleasanton's Cavalry . . .	1,150	
	<hr/>	53,990

*Centre*

One Division of II Corps .	6,000	
III Corps (en route to join the Right Wing) . . .	18,500	
	<hr/>	24,500

*Left Wing*

I Corps . . . . .	17,000	
VI „ . . . . .	23,500	
	<hr/>	40,500
<i>Stoneman's Cavalry</i> (approximately)	8,500	
Add Headquarters, Provost Guards, Signal Corps, Engineers and Artillery, say . . . . .	5,500	
	<hr/>	132,990

Approximately 133,000 all told.

Officers who wish to work out an interesting problem cannot do better than ask themselves, what ought Hooker to have done now? The information at their disposal is, if anything, better than Hooker had at the time and the maps are probably better. Having answered this question it would be good practice to write the Orders.



## CHAPTER VII

WHEN studying this campaign, I found that the Pike and the Plank roads were always being referred to, and being anxious to know what they were like, I wrote to the United States War College, and Brigadier-General Mills very kindly gave me the following information—which is of interest.

*The turnpike* was not a metalled road, but a graded dirt road, top-dressed with gravel, and corduroyed in the swampy bottoms which abound in that region. The corduroyed sections were graded and ditched and the road bed was then covered with corduroy or poles, varying from 3 to 8 inches in diameter and sixteen feet long, laid transversely and covered with sand, gravel, and clay to a depth of 3 or 4 inches.

*The Plank road* was in fact a road covered with planks about two inches thick and sixteen feet long, laid transversely and spiked to two longitudinal sleepers buried in the prepared road bed.

At the time of the war this road had fallen into bad repair and was full of holes, where planks

had broken through, exposing the soft clay bed beneath.

These plank roads were primarily constructed for the hauling of tobacco to market. The tobacco was packed in huge hogsheads, through which an axle was placed. By attaching draught animals to the axle-ends, the hogsheads were rolled to market along the plank roads, and arrived in much better condition than when rolled over ordinary dirt roads, and with the expenditure of less power than was necessary on poorer roads.

The country generally was densely wooded, as can be seen from the map; but there were a certain number of clearings. Going from Chancellorsville towards Fredericksburg, the country opened out in the neighbourhood of Tabernacle Church and south of Bank's Ford.

Hooker, apparently, was anxious to get out of the wooded country, and hoped to bring off his fight in the open.

*May 1.*—We will now follow out Hooker's moves during May 1.

It will be remembered that the 6th N.Y. Cavalry had been sent to Spottsylvania on the afternoon of the 30th—on their "uncertain and perilous mission."

During the night of the 30th–1st the regiment, or rather the remnants of it, returned. It appears that they had arrived about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles short of Spottsylvania as it was getting dark. There they

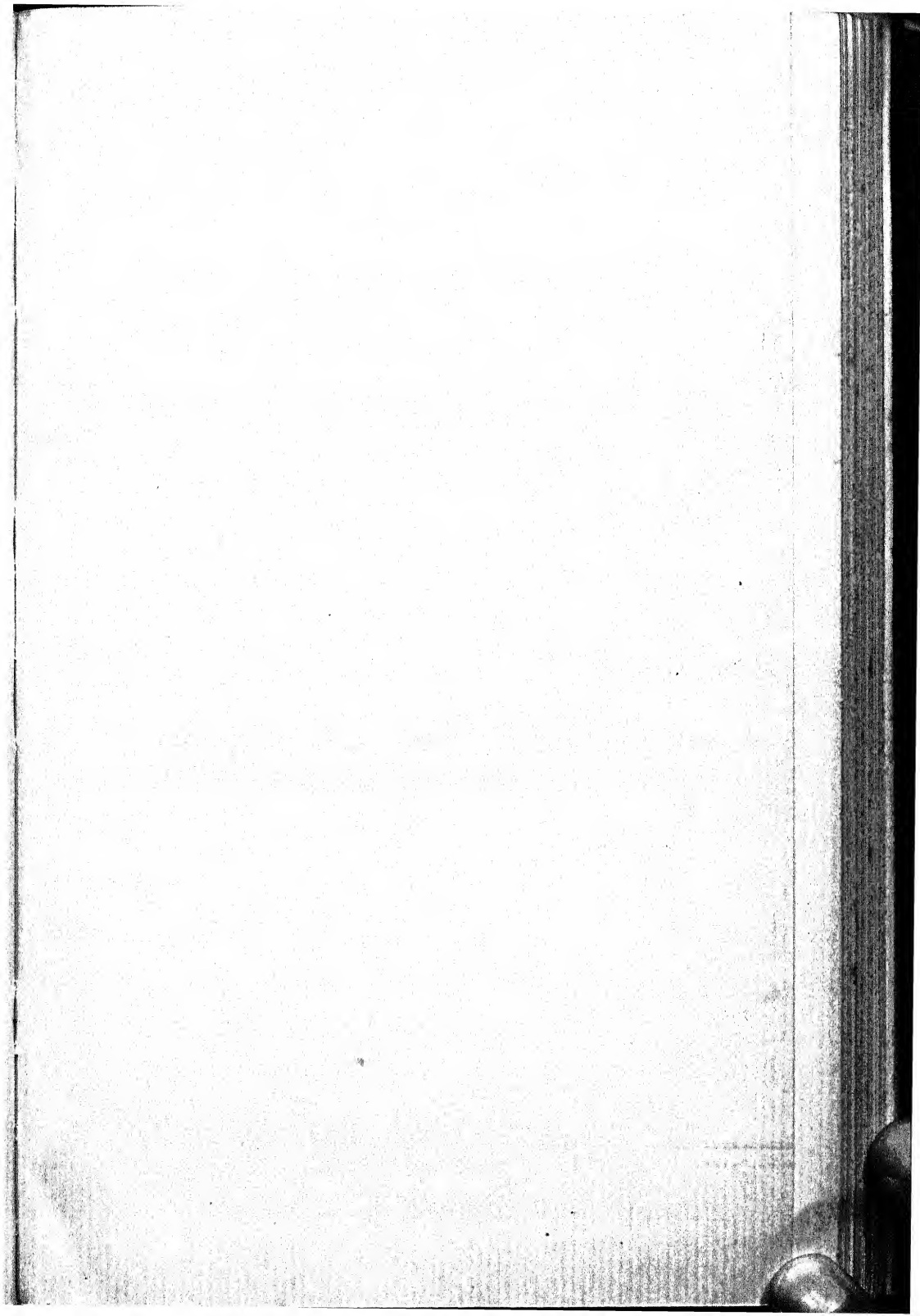
had been run into by a small party of the enemy's Cavalry who were coming down the road from the direction of Tod's Tavern; this party had been reinforced, and a regular hurly burly had taken place in the dark—swords, pistols, carbines, all having full play. The regiment eventually broke its way back, and returned with promptness to the shelter of its own outpost line, having lost 51 killed, wounded, and missing.

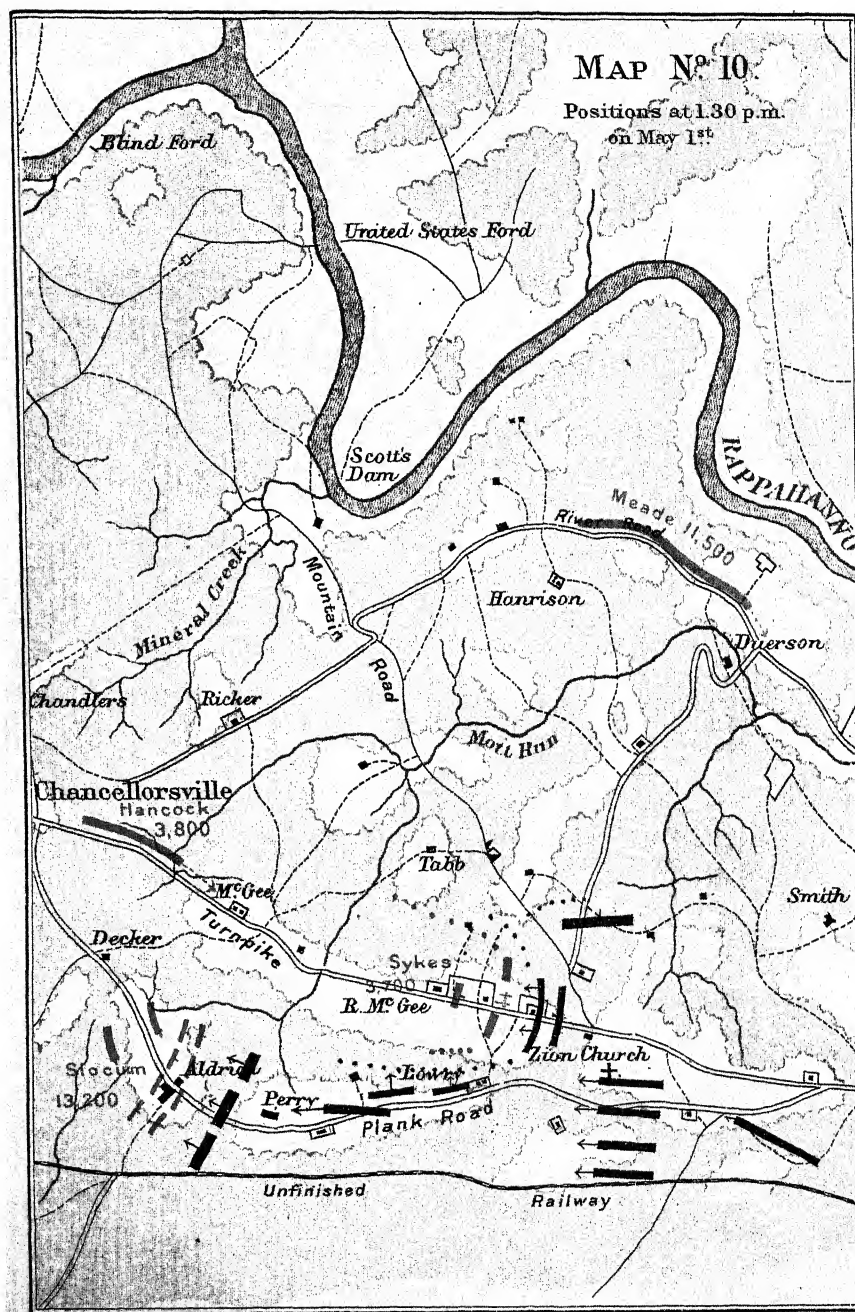
As a matter of fact, although they probably did not realise it at the time, they had been overtaken by Stuart, with F. Lee's Brigade, who were trying to make their way back to rejoin Lee. Owing to the weakness of the Federal force and the promptness with which Stuart attacked, the Confederates were able to clear a road for themselves, but the encounter delayed them some 12 hours.

If Stoneman's whole Cavalry force had been on that flank, instead of a single regiment, it is doubtful whether Stuart would ever have been able to force his way through.

We are told by Federal authorities that the minds of the subordinate commanders were considerably disturbed by a reported remark of Hooker's to the effect that God Almighty could not prevent his destroying the rebel Army. This was looked upon as blasphemy, and created a profound impression.

Hooker decided to wait the arrival of the III





Corps, which had bivouacked the previous night at Hamet. The Corps commenced crossing at the U.S. Ford at 7.30 a.m., and by 11 a.m. the head of the Column began arriving at the cross roads one mile north of Chancellorsville. One Brigade of this Corps was left behind to guard the Ford, relieving the regiments of the II Corps, which rejoined their units.

Eventually, after wasting much precious time, Hooker got on the move. But he did not advance his whole force, and his mind was still fixed on taking up a position, with the hope of obliging the Confederates to attack on ground of his own choosing. In none of Hooker's orders or instructions is to be found any hint of his assuming the offensive.

About 11 a.m., the Federal Columns moved forward, having previously loaded their pieces.

*The V Corps* (Meade) took the two roads to the left (see Map No. 10), two Divisions on the river road, one Division (Sykes) on the turnpike.

*The XII Corps* (Slocum) took the Plank road, and was to be followed by the XI Corps.

These two Corps, V and XII (28,000) had orders to take up the following position by 2 p.m.:—The V Corps on the ridge just beyond Motts Run, the XII Corps about Tabernacle Church—a front of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

The point to note about this is that Hooker prepared to take up a position inside the enemy's



lines; he knew the enemy were between him and the Tabernacle Church, but he may have thought it was only a small force which would fall back in front of him.

It passes belief that with his previous experience of Lee's fighting qualities and well-proved preference for attack, Hooker could have imagined he would be allowed to continue his advance unhindered by the enemy; but such appears to have been the case.

While the V, XI, and XII Corps were to advance, the II and III Corps were to remain about Chancellorsville and prepare that position for defence; the bulk of the Cavalry were also to remain behind.

Just as the advance was beginning, the following message was sent to Butterfield:

"11.30 a.m. Direct Maj.-Gen. Sedgwick to threaten an attack in full force at 1 o'clock, and to continue in that attitude until further orders. Let the demonstration be as severe as can be, but not an attack."

From this we gather Hooker was under the impression that the enemy's main force was still in front of Sedgwick.

It will be noticed also that Hooker refused to commit himself: there was to be no attack either by the Right or the Left Wing.

In any case, it made very little difference what



Hooker desired, as the order did not reach Sedgwick till 5.45 p.m., *i.e.* about six hours later. Although, of course, Hooker, having sent off the order, probably took it for granted that it was duly delivered, and consequently he must have expected the demonstration to take place.

We will briefly follow out the movements of the Right Wing.

Hardly had the three columns started down their respective roads, when it became obvious that the enemy were no longer going to remain quiescent.

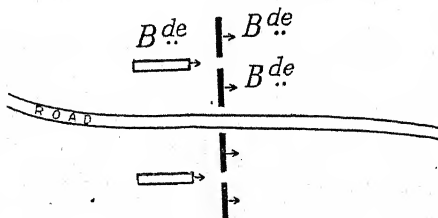
The Federal Cavalry Regiment, which was on picquet about where the Mott Run crosses the turnpike, was driven in at 11.15 a.m.: The picquets were reinforced by their supports, and were able to delay the enemy until Sykes' Division (V Corps) came up the Pike road.

Sykes' men advanced rapidly and deployed; he had, however, only 3,700 men—and, although he handled his force well and boldly, he was steadily pushed back, principally owing to the enemy constantly outflanking him. Probably the main lesson to be learnt from this affair is the danger of being outflanked in wooded country: it is upsetting to the nerves both of the Commander and the men.

Another point to note is that Sykes found himself unable to keep touch with the Columns on

his right and left; in fact, he failed even to communicate, although mounted officers frequently made the attempt.

The XII Corps (13,200) advancing down the Plank road ran into the enemy's skirmishers almost at once. The Corps deployed, a Division on each side of the road, thus :—



This deployment took till 1 p.m.—say just on two hours: a fact we should note, as it gives an idea how long these deployments take.

By this time the opposing firing lines were fairly closely engaged.

The two Divisions of the V Corps on the river road, however, continued their march practically unopposed.

In order to support Sykes, who was being pushed back along the Pike road, Couch (II Corps) was ordered to send a Division (Hancock's) to his support.

Let us try and picture to ourselves the situation as it presented itself to Hooker at Chancellorsville.

Let us take the time as 1 p.m.

Hooker was probably fairly well informed as to the situation of his three Columns. Map No. 10 gives their approximate positions.

Besides the troops advancing along the three roads, numbering some 32,200, there remained behind in the immediate neighbourhood of Chancellorsville :

The III Corps—just arrived from the U.S. Ford ;

The XI Corps—under orders to follow the XII Corps ;

One Division of II Corps ;

And the bulk of the Cavalry.

These troops must have totalled about 36,000 altogether.

Other information which Hooker was in possession of was :

- (1) A despatch from Butterfield—saying that 10,000 to 15,000 men had apparently left Sedgwick's front during the morning, and that the enemy would probably meet Hooker somewhere between Chancellorsville and Hamilton's Crossing.
- (2) Reports had come in that the enemy's Cavalry was demonstrating against his right and rear, in the direction of Wilderness Church and the Germanna Ford Road.

As far as I can piece together the story this

gives fairly accurately the situation as it must have appeared to Hooker at the time he made his momentous decision to fall back.

It will doubtless be noticed that Hooker's Right Wing now consisted of approximately 70,000 men. This force was divided into practically two equal parts—half advancing, the other half behind, but still not far behind.

To withdraw, now, in the face of the enemy was a shocking thing to do. Hooker had superior numbers and had come out to destroy the enemy's army. Every individual soldier knew this; a withdrawal as soon as bullets began to fly was bound to destroy the morale of the troops and shatter their confidence in "Fighting Joe Hooker."

They were not likely to forget how Hooker had boasted "All is ours," "The enemy must fly ingloriously or come out and fight us on ground of our own choosing," or his other unhappy remark, "The army of Virginia is now our legitimate property."

If a general talks in this vainglorious strain, the troops expect his action to be as bold as his words: when they find that their trust is misplaced an uneasy feeling of impending disaster rapidly spreads throughout all ranks.

Also, if enveloping tactics or strategy are being carried out, it stands to reason that the essence of the business is to close in on the enemy—press

on—press on. The closer the two wings approach one another, the greater the chance of success. The further the wings are apart the greater the chance of being defeated in detail.

To prevent the enemy concentrating against one wing, it is absolutely necessary to press him hard everywhere. In order to keep him fully employed a steady relentless pressure must be maintained. The Commander must harden his heart; the time has come to put his cards on the table. Compare the situation again with Sadowa. If the Crown Prince or Frederick Charles had fallen back or even taken up "positions"—what would have been the result? We cannot lay these lessons too carefully to heart; one of these days it may be our turn.

As the situation faced Hooker, it seems quite possible that, if he had simply allowed his three columns to carry on, they might have found the enemy too strong for them; that is to say, if he had not immediately ordered up the reserve troops about Chancellorsville.

It seems that the mistake Hooker made was in his original plan of advance.

The long delay at Chancellorsville was dangerous to a degree.

Why should not the whole Right Wing have advanced about 7 a.m. (or even on the previous afternoon instead of halting at Chancellorsville)?

II Corps all on Plank road.

V and XI     „     „     Turnpike road.

XII     „     „     River road.

Cavalry main body on right flank.

If the III Corps had been ordered to start bright and early from Hamet, and march on Chancellorsville, where the head of the Corps could easily have arrived about 9 or 10 a.m., it could then have been given further orders, according to the situation, and it would have made the requisite reserve under Hooker's personal control.

The Columns advancing up the three roads should have been ordered to attack the enemy wherever met, the Columns to close in to the firing, to march to the guns, and to endeavour always to outflank the enemy.

No doubt there are other plans which Hooker might have adopted; but if soldiers are to learn anything from the study of history, they must think out these problems for themselves.

Bear in mind how the absence of Stoneman and his 9,000 Cavalry must have been regretted by Hooker. How he must now have wished for his Cavalry to scout well out to the front and above all to guard his right flank.

Consider whether it was wise to have left Sedgwick with such a large detachment opposite Fredericksburg. Would the purpose have been

achieved just as well if the VI Corps (Reynolds) had formed part of the Right Wing, and the demonstration by Sedgwick had been carried out by the I Corps alone?

Consider also whether Hooker should not have issued definite orders to Sedgwick to attack, instead of always qualifying his orders with "ifs" and "provided thats."

Do not forget that at 11.30 that morning, Hooker had sent an order to the Left Wing under Sedgwick, to make a demonstration at 1 o'clock, that he was under the impression that this order had been received and was being acted on, and now at 1 o'clock, the very hour the demonstration was to be made, he ordered the Right Wing to retire.

Well, we must pass on. Hooker made his decision, which in all probability lost him the battle. He sent out orders at about 1 p.m. to retire to the positions of the previous night. It was received by the Corps Commanders and the troops with feelings of absolute despair, and even protests. But it was carried out without great difficulty as the only troops who had become really closely engaged were Sykes' men on the Pike road. Sykes handled the Division well. Hancock, a fine fighting soldier, deployed his command, Sykes passed through and Hancock became engaged in his turn.

The XII Corps fell back without any incident,



being followed by the enemy, who, however, went carefully as though this easy victory made them suspicious of some trap or deep design.

The two Divisions of the V Corps on the River Road did not receive the order to retire until the head of the Column had arrived within two miles of Bank's Ford. We can imagine the feelings of the men as they were told to turn about: just as victory seemed within their grasp, they realised that once more their supreme Commander had failed them. Having been told to retire, we are told they did so at a killing pace, as it must have been obvious to the dullest intellect that they were in considerable danger of having their retreat cut off.

Hooker's telegram to Butterfield, announcing the withdrawal, is characteristic of the man:

"2 p.m. From character of information have suspended attack. The enemy may attack me. I will try it. Tell Sedgwick to keep a sharp look out and attack *if* can succeed."<sup>1</sup>

At 4 p.m., Butterfield answered this telegram:

"Suspension of your attack notified Sedgwick. He and Reynolds remain quiet. They consider that to attack before you have accomplished some success, in view of the strong position and numbers in their front, might fail to dislodge the enemy and render them unserviceable at the

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J.G.

proper time. They are anxious to hear from you."

Which testifies to the truth of the old military saying "sound military reasons for doing nothing."

About 4.30 p.m., Hooker hearing that the passage of the enemy's troops from his (the enemy's) right to his left had ceased since 11.30 a.m., seems to have plucked up heart again, and he issued orders to the retiring columns to take up positions on the road.

But it was too late. Couch told the bearer of the message, "Tell General Hooker it is too late, the enemy are on my right and rear. I am in full retreat."

The Federal Army fell back to the positions of the previous night.

The enemy followed up along the Pike and Plank roads until brought up by the Federal line of battle. No serious effort was made to pierce this line, but Lee reconnoitred it as carefully as the wooded nature of the country would admit, sending reconnoitring parties to tap the line, doubtless with the object of locating Hooker's disposition and especially to try and fix the flanks. These reconnoitring parties would bump up against the Federal line, shots would be exchanged and the party would try elsewhere.

At first Lee was anxious to attack Hooker's

left, so as to cut him off from the U. S. Ford, but there was practically a continuous line right down to the river.

The Federal right was not apparently located.

Reading the Official History one is immediately struck with the number of orders, messages, scraps of information, some of great importance and others of a most trivial nature, which were passing through Butterfield's hands. Butterfield, it will be remembered, was left near Falmouth to look after the communications and form a link between the two wings. Amongst other messages we find one from General Hunt, the C.R.A., asking Butterfield to send down to Bank's Ford a mule load of forage for the horses belonging to Hunt, his staff, servants, and orderlies. This arrived in the middle of the crisis and one wonders whether the mule was ever sent.

During the afternoon Hooker had become uneasy about Bank's Ford, as he thought it might be rushed. He had therefore sent Hunt to look into the matter. The latter reported that there were only 16 guns and 600 men holding the ford, and asked that at least a strong Division should be sent there. Gibbon from near Falmouth was ordered to send a Brigade and some guns there.

This reinforcement did not apparently satisfy General Benham, who was in command at Bank's

Ford. Butterfield's patience was exhausted and he wired to Hooker at 10 p.m. :

"There are now 22 guns at Bank's Ford and a Brigade of Infantry ordered there. Benham says if he had a full Division, he should feel that he could defy them. If he could not defy them from the river with what he has, he ought to be pitched into the river himself."

I mention these incidents as they show how a Commander-in-Chief is always being asked to reinforce everywhere, and how essential it is that the mind be kept clear and troops not frittered away on side issues. It also proves that even a Chief of the Staff is human.

Judging from the messages sent by Butterfield, it appears that he at any rate was under the impressions that both Hood's and Pickett's Division had rejoined Lee. Peck at Suffolk, with more reason, was equally confident that Hood and Pickett were in front of him. There are indications that Lee and Jackson were sending over so-called deserters to spread this rumour.

What of Stoneman and his Cavalry during the day?

Stoneman with half his force had disappeared and nothing was known about him.

Averell with the other half had been bickering placidly with W. Lee's Cavalry Brigade near Rapidan Station. Hooker hearing of this sent him the following order at 6.30 p.m. :

"I am directed by the Major-General Commanding to inform you that he does not understand what you are doing at Rapidan Station. If this finds you at that place, you will immediately return to the U. S. Ford, and remain there till further orders and report in person.

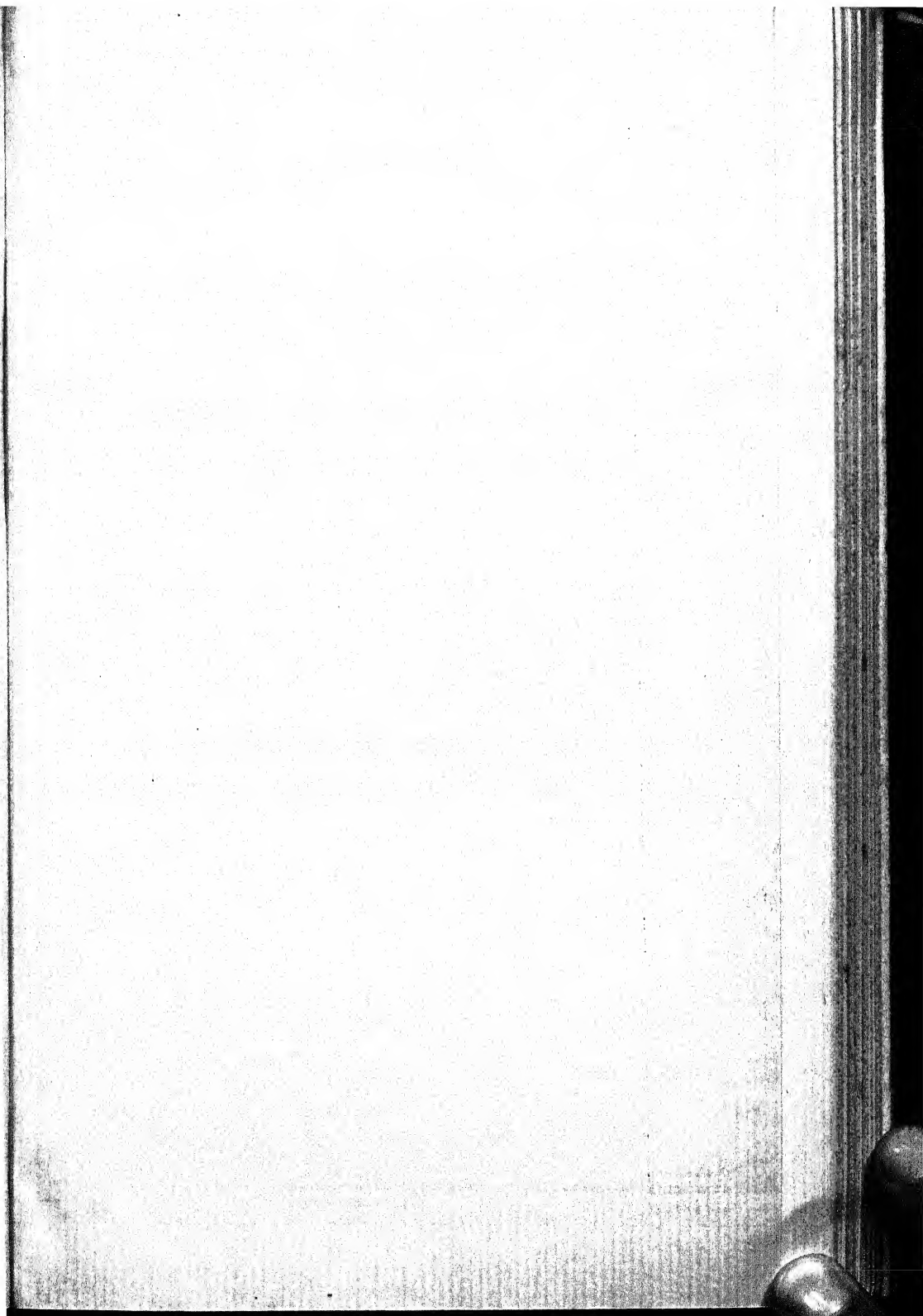
"P.S.—If this reaches you at 1 o'clock in the morning you will start immediately."

As a matter of fact this message arrived and fetched Averell back; but it is not a good order. He was told to come in if he was at Rapidan Station; but what if he happened to be somewhere else? Moreover, why should not Averell have been ordered to march via Germanna Ford, with the object of acting on the extreme right flank? All through this campaign Hooker's handling of the Cavalry was beneath contempt.

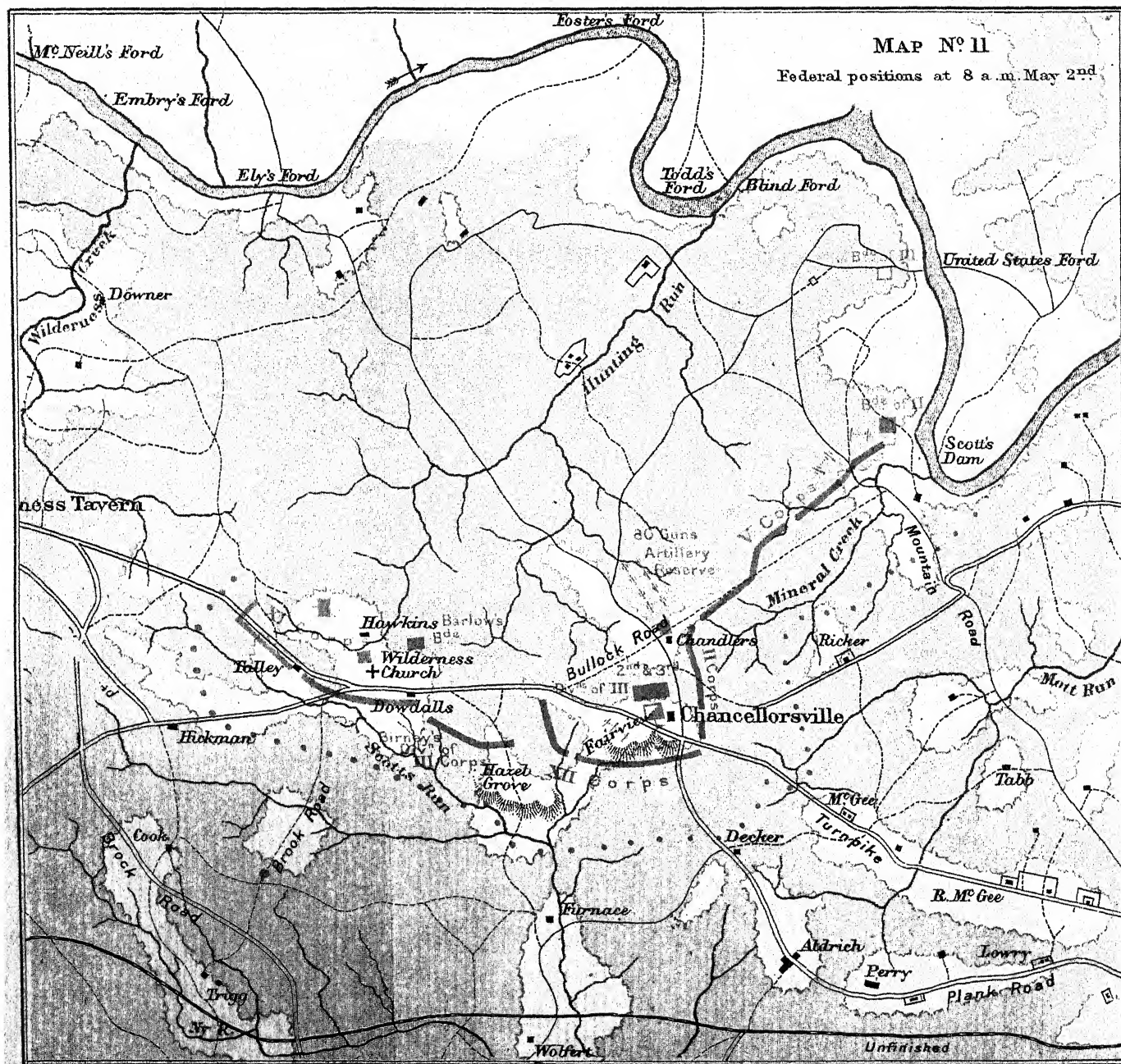
The troops settled down for the night as best they could. Fatigue parties were busy during the night cutting down trees, making log entrenchments and abattis. Both sides by this time had realised the value of entrenchments.

Hooker must have spent an anxious night. His plans had not worked out as he had expected. His confident boast of "as soon as we have Chancellorsville all will be ours" did not seem to be panning out, and his subordinate Commanders had already lost confidence in him.

*May 2.*—At 1.55 a.m. Hooker wrote to Butterfield ordering Reynolds' Corps (VI) to join the Right









Wing at once, thus reducing Sedgwick's Left Wing to one Corps. Reynolds had to march 23 or 24 miles to get to Chancellorsville.

At daylight that morning the Federal lines were slightly altered. Map No. 11 shows the approximate positions at 8 a.m.

We should note that the Federal right rested in the forest: at Taylor's Farm is some rising ground which commanded the Federal line on this flank. Note also the clearings at Fairview and Hazelgrove, which were connected by a narrow opening. The ground round Chancellorsville is gently rolling—Chancellor's house being on a broad-topped hill, the highest point of which is Fairview. Hazelgrove is another hill of about the same elevation, and from it one could see Chancellor's House, Fairview, and the open ground about these places.

At daylight Hooker rode along his line towards the XI Corps; he was greeted with loud cheers and returned to his H. Q. at 9 a.m.

Gun firing opened at 6 a.m., the enemy advancing towards Chancellorsville, between the Pike and Plank roads; the attack, however, was not pushed home.

At 9 a.m. Hooker received a report from Birney (who commanded a division of the III Corps near Hazelgrove), to say that a column of the enemy was visible, moving continuously across his front toward the right; this movement had been going

on since 8 a.m. Hooker himself from his tent could catch glimpses of this column crossing Scott's Run near the Furnace.

What Hooker thought, we are now never likely to know for certain. The movement must, however, have meant one of two things—either a retreat towards Gordonsville, or an attempt to turn the Federal right.

At first one may be inclined to think that Hooker can hardly have thought it meant a retreat. It was unlike Lee to retreat. But, on the other hand, when we study this campaign we see that Hooker was imbued with the idea that Lee must fly ingloriously.

The road that the column was moving on led towards Gordonsville, and even granting that Hooker believed that the Confederates would retire, still it was quite possible that Lee might have decided to send a portion of his force round to attack the Federal right, and if the attack failed this portion would have a clear line of retreat to Gordonsville.

The remainder of his force might either be a rear or flank guard—or it might be meant to attack, and if the attack failed, this portion would have a clear line of retreat to Richmond.

In any case, the question Hooker should have asked himself was not so much, what is the enemy doing? but what shall I do?

Hooker still decided not to commit himself.

It almost seems as though his experiences at Fredericksburg had given him a dread of attacking even a column on the march.

He satisfied himself by sending at 9.30 a.m. to the XI Corps to warn Howard to be ready in case the enemy attacked his flank—adding “We have good reason to believe that the enemy is moving to our right. Please advance your picquets for the purpose of observation as far *as may be safe*, in order to obtain timely information of their approach.”<sup>1</sup>

It never seems to have occurred to Hooker that he might have made use of Pleasanton's Cavalry to cover his right from surprise. The Cavalry were standing there massed under his nose, a few hundred yards away, *doing nothing*.

Hooker apparently never realised that the best way of securing his own safety would have been to attack the enemy. He knew that part of Lee's force was in front of Sedgwick; he now saw for himself that the enemy was further dividing his forces; he knew that he was greatly superior in strength, and yet he remained passive.

A wave of the hand would have set in motion a heavy attack. The V, II, III, and XII Corps were well placed, the order to move had only to be given.

At the same time as the above message was sent to Howard, another was despatched to Butterfield :

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J. G.

"9.30 a.m. Instruct General Sedgwick, *if an opportunity presents itself with reasonable expectation of success*, to attack the enemy in his front. We have reliable information that all the enemy's Divisions except Ewell are in this vicinity."<sup>1</sup>

Again we notice the invariable "if."

Reynolds' Corps (I) had been ordered to join the Right Wing; and was now in all probability on the march, and not likely to become available with either wing until late in the evening.

Would it not have been better to have left Reynolds with Sedgwick, and given definite orders to attack at dawn? I do not mean to suggest that it was right to have made Sedgwick so strong in the original instance, but, having done so, it would have been better not to try and swap horses in the middle of the stream.

About 10 a.m. two Confederate Batteries on the turnpike opened fire on the troops about Chancellorsville, probably with the object of drawing Hooker's attention to that part of the field.

About noon Birney's Division, first Division of III Corps, was ordered to advance towards the Furnace, and shortly afterwards Whipple's Division, third Division of III Corps, was sent up from the reserve to support Birney. The

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J. G.

Confederates were driven back past the Furnace as far as the line of the unfinished railway.

Sickles, the III Corps Commander, took charge of the advance and at 2.30 p.m. reported that he was advancing to ascertain whether the enemy was retreating, and that it was practicable to gain the road by which the enemy was marching and thus break his column; but that he wanted the support of the XI and XII Corps on his right and left respectively. But Hooker replied he had no troops to spare.

At 4 p.m., however, Pleasanton's Cavalry Brigade and one Brigade from the XI Corps were ordered to support Sickles. This withdrawal of a Brigade from the XI Corps meant the weakening of Hooker's right. Perhaps he had forgotten that the enemy were moving to his right and that there was danger in that direction; perhaps as nothing had happened up to this hour he became persuaded that the enemy were after all retiring to Gordonsville. But, if so, why remain so passive? Why did he hit out with only two Divisions instead of with his whole strength?

It will be seen that the advance of Birney's Division left a gap of nearly a mile between the left of the XI and right of the XII Corps.

The XI faced south, two regiments (say 900 men) were bent back on the extreme right flank. The men holding the southern face, were placed actually on the Pike road, arms were

stacked and there was hardly any room left in the roadway. Dense forests ran on both sides of the road, except at the clearings shown in map. Most of the troops were extended in the firing line. The largest formed body in reserve was Barlow's Brigade near the Wilderness Church, and this was the Brigade which Howard sent to support Sickles.

What had Howard been doing since he received Hooker's warning message of 9.30 a.m.?

His headquarters were at Dowdall's Tavern. There can be no doubt that he received warnings of the coming blow, but he paid no attention. Confederate Cavalry patrols felt his front about Taylor's between 11 and 12 o'clock.

His picquets brought in two prisoners, who stated that they had lost their way and belonged to a column which was moving round Howard's right.

Small Infantry patrols were sent out a short distance and discovered that the enemy had skirmishers not more than one and a half to two miles in front.

At 2 o'clock, the Divisional Commander on the right was distinctly warned by his picquets that the enemy was moving round his right; he refused to believe it and apparently did not even warn his Corps Commander. Colonel Friend, the Officer of the Day, reported the same thing, but was rebuked and told not to

bring on panics; Friend returned again with the same warning, and was called a coward and told the enemy were retreating.<sup>1</sup>

From all this, it seems certain that Howard and two out of the three Divisional Commanders were convinced the enemy was retiring, and nothing would shake them in this belief. It shows the danger of jumping to conclusions, and how hard it is to realise that the enemy are doing something unexpected.

At 2.45 p.m. the General Commanding the first Division (XI Corps) received the following message from Major Owen Rice, who was on duty in the picquet line on the right.

"A large body of the enemy is massing in my front. For God's sake make disposition to receive him."

This message was taken to the Corps Commander, who however greeted the officer with taunts.

At 3 p.m. another officer up the Plank road sent back information to the same effect; he also was jeered at.

It is doubtful whether Howard kept Hooker informed of these repeated rumours.

So little was Howard thinking of the seriousness of the situation that when Hooker's order arrived shortly after 4 p.m. instructing Howard to send a Brigade to support Sickles, he went

<sup>1</sup> See "The Campaign of Chancellorsville" for further details.



off himself with the Brigade to see how things were going on.

As for Hooker, he also appears to have forgotten his apprehensions of the morning. At 2.30 p.m. he sent round a circular ordering all Corps to replenish their supplies, with a view to an early start.

At 4.10 p.m. he sent the following message to Butterfield:

“The Major-General Commanding directs that General Sedgwick cross the river *as soon as indications will permit*; capture Fredericksburg with everything in it, and vigorously pursue the enemy. *We know that the enemy is fleeing*, trying to save his trains. Two of Sickles’ Divisions are among them.”<sup>1</sup>

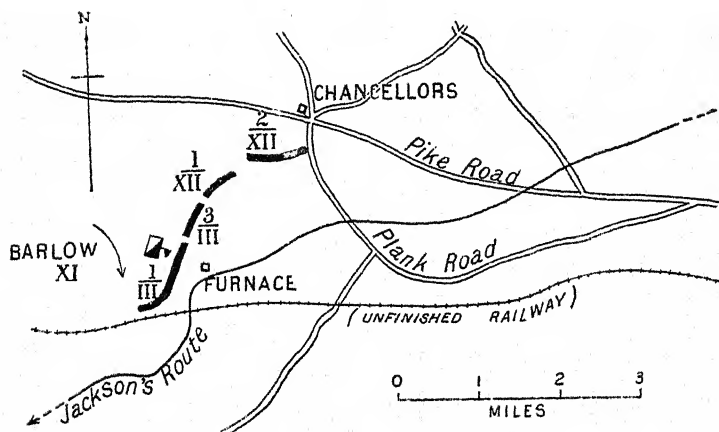
Even now at the eleventh hour, when he thought the enemy were retreating, Hooker could not screw himself up to issue a straight order. How he can have thought the enemy was still really retiring, goodness knows! The enemy were still keeping him busy opposite Chancellorsville along the Pike and Plank roads. Sickles was making little if any progress and was heavily engaged. As so often happened in the earlier battles of the war, the Federals were fighting in piecemeal fashion, with an utter lack of co-operation. Sickles with two Divisions and a Cavalry Brigade was hitting

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J. G.

out, while the rest of the Army looked on! This is not the way to win battles.<sup>1</sup>

At 4.30 p.m. Slocum (XII Corps) was ordered to support Sickles; he did so by ordering forward one Division to connect with Sickles' left flank.

The situation at 5 p.m. being



It was just at this hour that the storm which had been brewing burst with terrific violence on the extreme right flank of the XI Corps.

The XI Corps skirmishers up the Pike road had been bickering with those of the enemy. Suddenly a long heavy line of Infantry burst their way through the forest, and with a roar of cheering, rebel yells, and bugles blowing they

<sup>1</sup> Officers who were in Ladysmith may remember a yarn that went the round of the garrison. A native runner had just come in and on being asked about the fighting at the Tugela he was reported to have said: "The English are a curious people; half their Army goes out to fight while the other half amuse themselves bathing in the river."

advanced astride the Pike. The Federal picquets could not stand for a moment; back they went, and close on their heels came the enemy, the light of battle in their eyes.

The Divisional Commander on the right, who all day had been throwing taunts at officers and men who had persistently warned him of the danger, was now speechless. As so often happens, the talker and the swaggerer was not the man for the crisis; not that much could have been done *then*—the attack came much too suddenly; there was no time to rectify faulty dispositions.

The small force of the XI Corps (two regiments) which had been thrown back on the right flank, did its best, the men standing firmly to receive the onset, but to their amazement they saw the enemy's line extending far beyond both their flanks. The affair was over in a minute, it became a wild flight for life.

Howard, who had just returned from his visit to Sickles, galloped to Taylor's Hill; there he saw a sight which must have appalled him. Crowds of fugitives rushing up the road, throwing their rifles away, and mad with panic. It was useless to try and rally the men.

By 6 p.m., or after one hour's fighting, the enemy were in complete possession of Taylor's Hill; to oppose their further advance the third Division of the XI Corps, about 5,000 men in all, held a rough line extending from the woods

opposite Hawkins' Farm, by the Wilderness Church to Dowdall's Tavern.

The enemy gave them little time to prepare for the shock, and, after a struggle which only lasted about ten minutes, this line was also swept away. The Brigade of the XI Corps which had been sent off to support Sickles was badly needed at this time.

A third and last attempt was made to stay the enemy's advance, just east of Wilderness Church, but the sight of the fugitives and their state of panic was more than the men's nerves could stand; and when Jackson's men advanced to the assault, this third line melted away. The time was now about 7.10 p.m. To all intents and purposes the XI Corps had been cleared off the slate—guns, horses, and men went in a wild mob to the rear, carrying alarm and despondency along the Federal line.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE first intimation Hooker had of the disaster was at about 6.30 p.m. Distant firing had been heard, but it was attributed either to Sickles or perhaps even to Stoneman's Cavalry; there was no apprehension and Hooker was sitting placidly in the veranda of the Chancellor House. Suddenly men and vehicles were seen coming down the Pike road from the direction of Dowdall's Tavern. "My God, here they come!" exclaimed one of the staff.

In a few minutes Hooker was aware that the enemy in great force had struck his right flank and that the XI Corps was being smashed up.

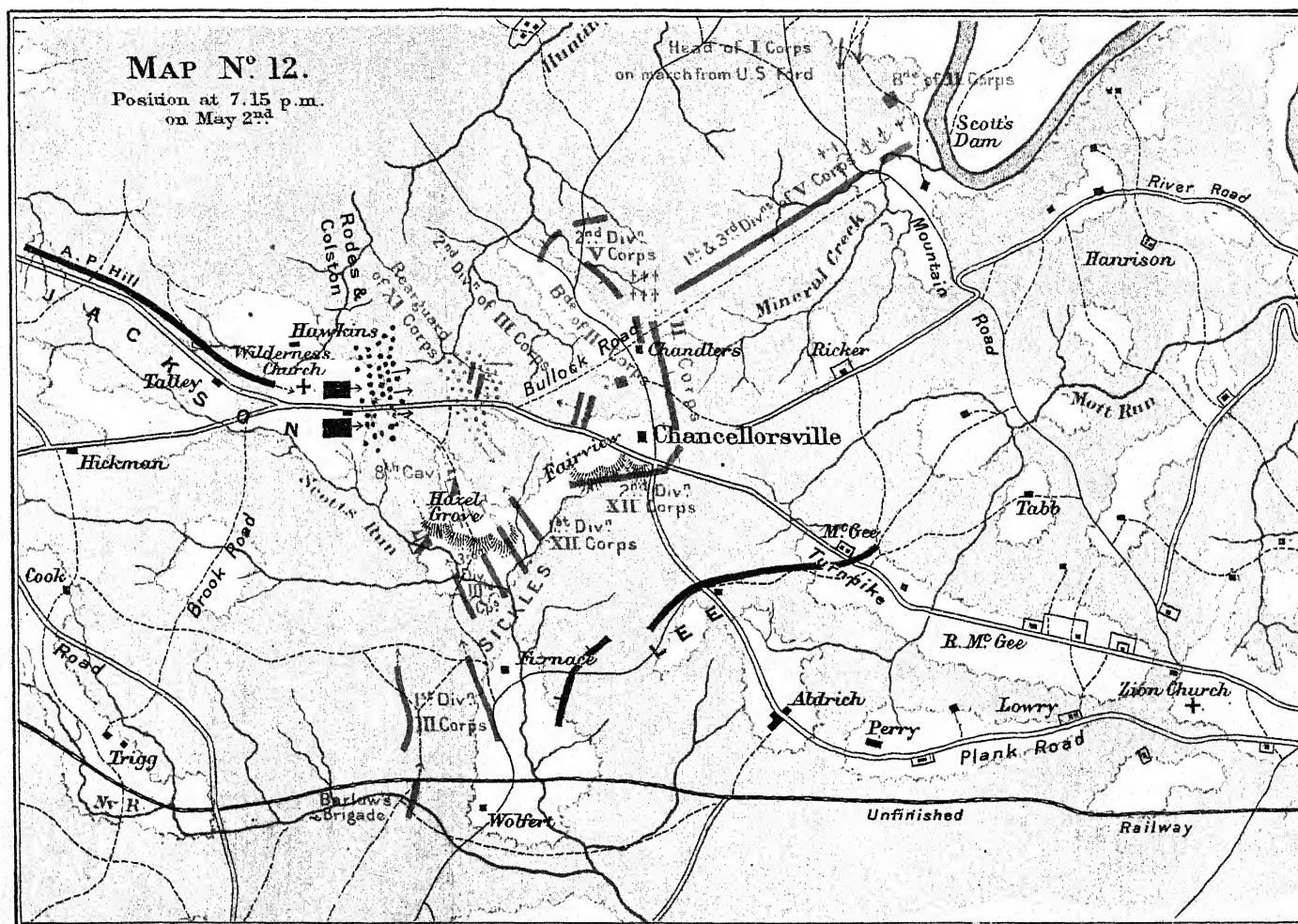
Guns were hastily collected at Fairview to bar the Confederates' advance.

A division of the V Corps was posted at the cross roads near Chandlers—to cover the U. S. Ford road.

A brigade of the II Corps was placed across the road running north from Chancellorsville, with the double object of keeping back the enemy and collecting and re-forming the fugitives of the XI Corps.







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Just about this time, the I Corps reported that the head of their column was crossing the U. S. Ford (having come, as previously explained, from Sedgwick's command). It was ordered to "occupy the ground vacated by the XI Corps."

In the meantime Sickles had heard that the XI Corps was being roughly handled on his right; his command was scattered but not really heavily engaged—he was able to break off the fight.

Pleasanton was ordered to send a Cavalry regiment to report to Howard. At 6.45 p.m. the 8th Pa. Cavalry left the Furnace, and proceeded towards the Pike road via Hazel Grove. The full extent of the disaster to the XI Corps was not realised, consequently the regiment turned down a narrow woodland path which runs from the northern edge of Hazel Grove towards Dowdall's Tavern. Still unconscious of immediate danger, they rode down this path "in twos." On reaching the main road, they saw to their astonishment that it was full of Confederate troops. The sudden meeting was a surprise to both parties. The 8th Cavalry drew sabres, galloped into the main road, and turned up to the left. The Confederates were thrown into some confusion, but using their rifles freely they checked the Cavalry, who after suffering heavy losses, made the best of their way back in small groups.

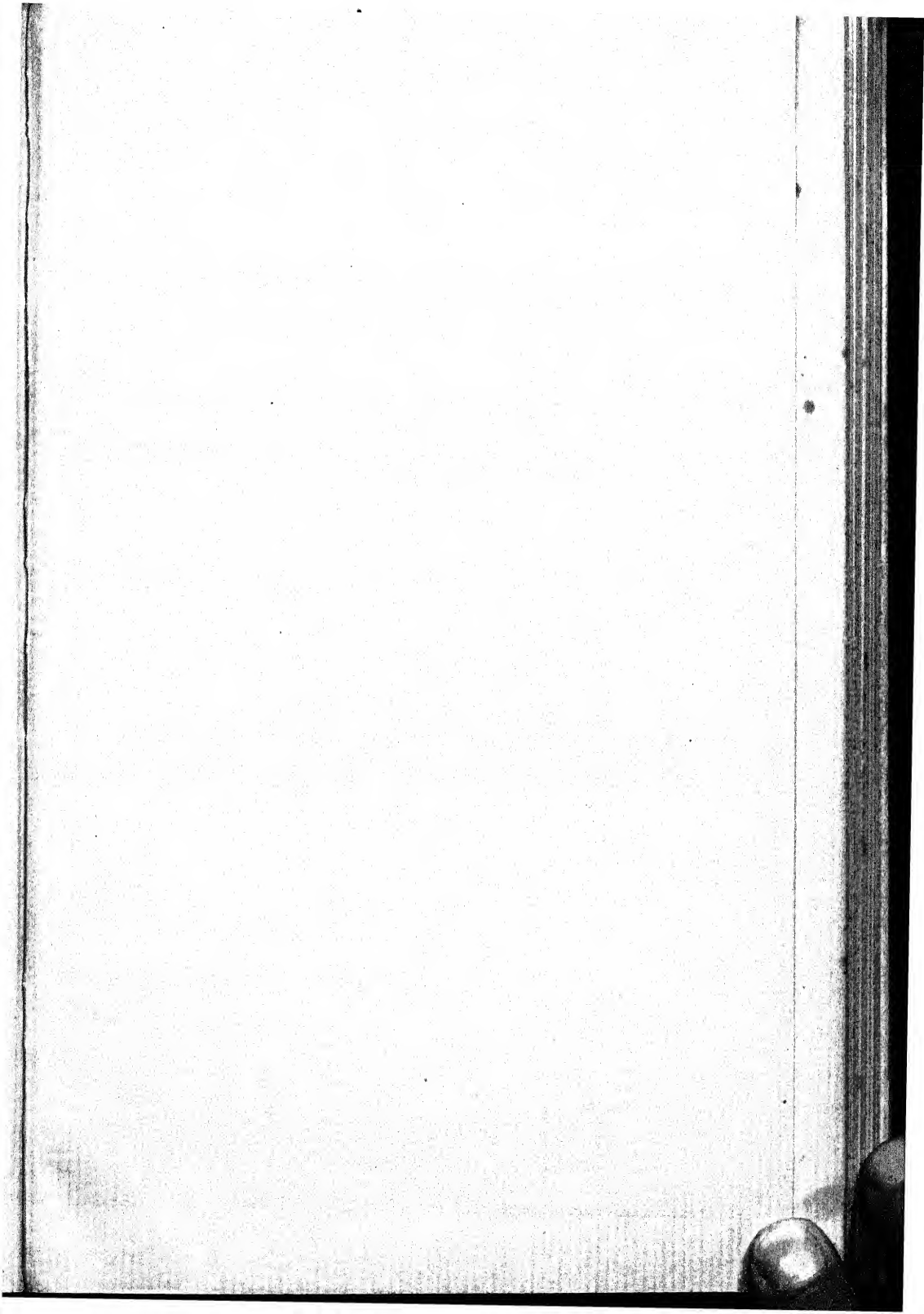
No doubt this surprise had the effect of delaying the Confederate advance. Although the charge itself was a fiasco, still it served a useful purpose as every minute was of value in allowing the Federals to prepare a line of resistance on Fairview.

The situation there was extremely critical. The only troops immediately available were the remaining division of the III Corps (the two other divisions were with Sickles) and one Brigade of the II Corps and the 2nd Division of the V Corps.

Just examine the positions of the troops (see Map No. 12).

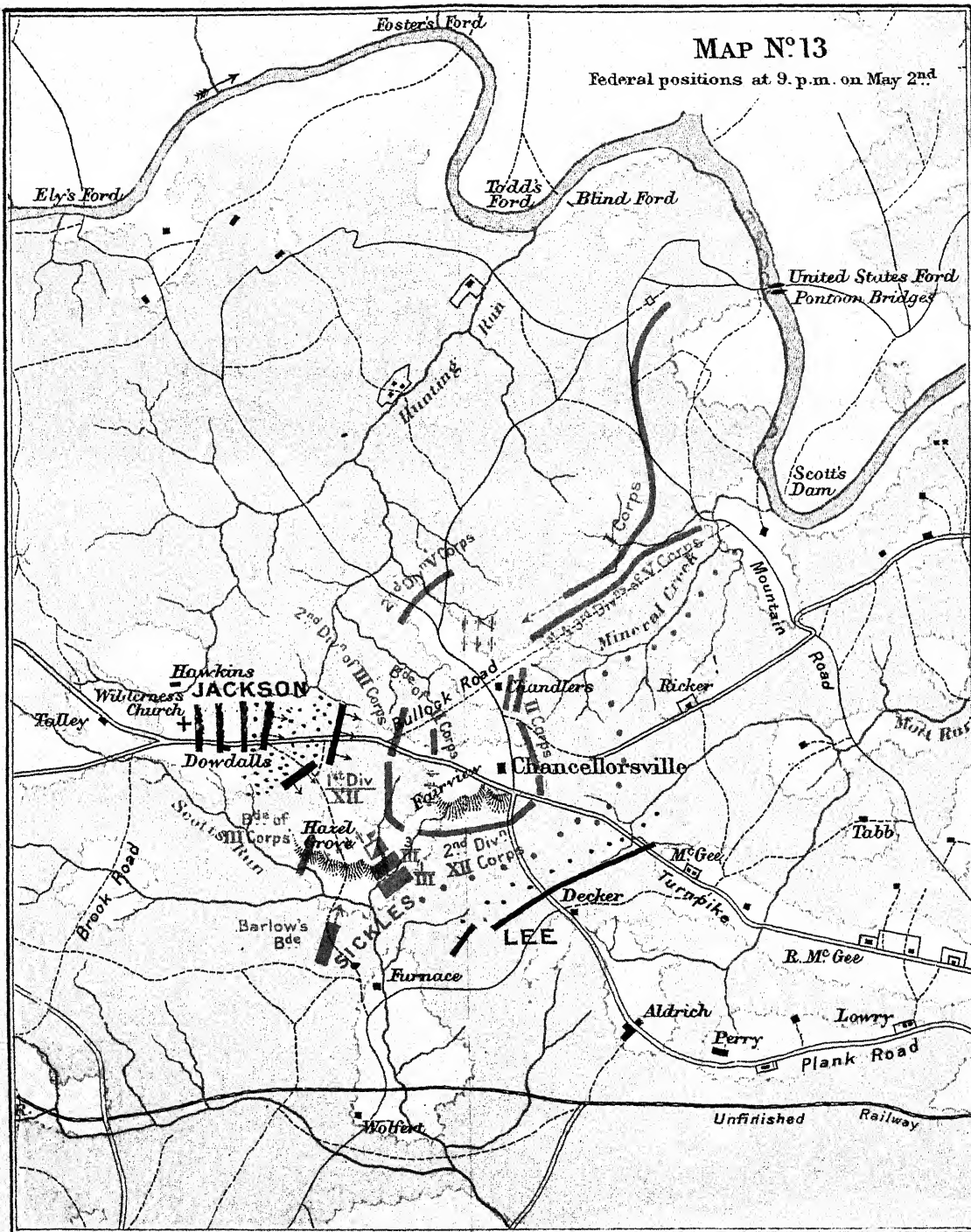
The time was about 7.15 p.m.; it was already nearly dark.

Hooker was on his horse near Chancellor's house, encouraging the 2nd Division III Corps and the brigade from the II Corps to advance boldly and receive the enemy with the bayonet. There was a scene of awful confusion: men of the XI Corps were streaming to the rear in a broken mob, most of them asking their way to the pontoon bridge in a mixture of German-English; ambulances, guns, loose horses, and beef cattle were stampeding everywhere. It is at moments such as this that even the best troops are liable to panic, and it says much for the reinforcements that they continued their advance unshaken by the confusion around them.



MAP N°13

Federal positions at 9. p.m. on May 2<sup>nd</sup>



Much depended upon their behaviour; Sickles' men were in danger of being cut off; they had been engaged since about 10 a.m., and were being followed up (but not heavily) by their late opponents—and they must have been in considerable confusion, moving as they were through woods in the increasing darkness.

Fortunately for the Federals, the enemy's advance was discontinued owing to exhaustion of the men, the great confusion caused by the rapid advance through the woods, the darkness, and the necessity for re-forming before attacking again.

But, of course, the Federals did not realise all their enemy's troubles; on the contrary a renewal of the attack was expected at any moment.

Artillery on both sides were firing away in the darkness. What with the shells flying and no one on either side knowing who was friend and who was foe, there were frequent small panics, which were by no means confined to the Federals.

As a matter of fact there does not appear to have been any serious attempt to carry the Fairview Heights.

We know, now, that Jackson had every intention of making one, but when he fell, and shortly afterwards A. P. Hill also, there was no one in the Southern Column who knew enough about

the situation to take the responsibility of making a further effort.

By 9 p.m. the situation was approximately as shown on Map No. 13.

Sickles, in no way daunted by the critical situation, was full of fight, and proposed a night attack by his two Divisions. Hooker agreed to this.

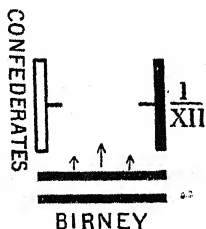
If this night attack had been well managed it might have been a huge success. We know now that Jackson's column was in great confusion, and his troops were distinctly jumpy. It would have taken very little to make a panic; there is no doubt that the loss of Jackson had taken much of the drive and fight out of the men, who were also physically fatigued.

But the arrangements for the night attack were not good. It can be seen that Sickles' two Divisions were nearly at right angles to the  $\frac{1}{XII}$  and  $\frac{2}{III}$  Divisions, who, of course, should have been warned of the proposed night attack; but apparently this was not done.

The firing died down about 10.30 p.m. or so, and by this time the moon had risen. Sickles sent forward the best part of Birney's Division to the attack at 11 p.m., but the enemy's position had not been properly located. The consequence



was that Birney forced his way in between the  $\frac{1}{\text{XII}}$  and Jackson's column, thus :—



Birney's left flank struck the enemy, but unfortunately the right of his line came into collision with the friendly XII Corps.

Everybody began to shoot at everybody, some of Birney's men attacking the XII Corps. The Federal Artillery opened into the turmoil.

A Federal General describing the scene says :  
 "Human language can give no idea of such a scene—such an infernal and yet sublime combination of sound, flame, and smoke, and dreadful yells of rage, of pain, of triumph, or of defiance."

Somehow or other Birney's division were got together again in Hazel Grove; the men were considerably shaken although, curiously enough, the actual losses turned out to be few.

This ended the fighting on May 2—a rough day's work, but of Hooker's force it may be said the following troops were hardly in action :—

The II Corps (except one Brigade).

The V Corps.

One Division of XII Corps.



Also, Reynolds' Corps (the I) had spent the day marching round from Sedgwick to join Hooker; they had done nothing, and all they had seen was a crowd of perspiring German fugitives belonging to the XI Corps, whose one desire was to reach safety and the pontoon bridge at the U.S. Ford.

The I Corps had left Sedgwick early that morning, marching via Hartwood Church. At one time Reynolds had thought of taking his Corps across at Bank's Ford. If he had done so, he would have come in on the rear of Lee; what the result would have been, goodness only knows!

What of the Cavalry? Nothing had been heard of Stoneman—which was only to be expected. Averell, it will be remembered, was on May 1 ordered to rejoin the Right Wing at the U.S. Ford. About 10.30 p.m. on the 2nd he, with his 3,400 Cavalry, arrived at Ely's Ford, only to find the ford held by the Confederates (Stuart, with his available Cavalry and one Infantry Regiment—say 1,000 strong all told—having gone there when Jackson was bringing off his attack on the XI Corps). Averell went into bivouac on the north bank.

It is typical of the grand fighting spirit of Stuart that he, with the smaller force, decided to attack. The attack, as a matter of fact, did not come off, as a staff officer arrived with the news that Jackson and Hill were both wounded, and

Stuart found himself in command of the whole of Jackson's Column. But before he left he determined to stir up Averell, who had bivouacked in an exposed position; three volleys were accordingly fired across the river, Averell's horses were stampeded and were not collected until morning, and even then it took time to sort the horses, as there were no brands used to show to which regiment a horse belonged. With this parting thrust Stuart galloped off to take up his new command, leaving F. Lee in charge at Ely's Ford.

Besides the steps already narrated, which Hooker took to meet the situation created by Jackson's sudden blow, it should be mentioned that the I Corps received orders about 10.30 p.m. to take up a position on the extreme right—along the Hunting Run, with their right resting on the Rapidan, and their left connecting with Sykes' Division of the V Corps.

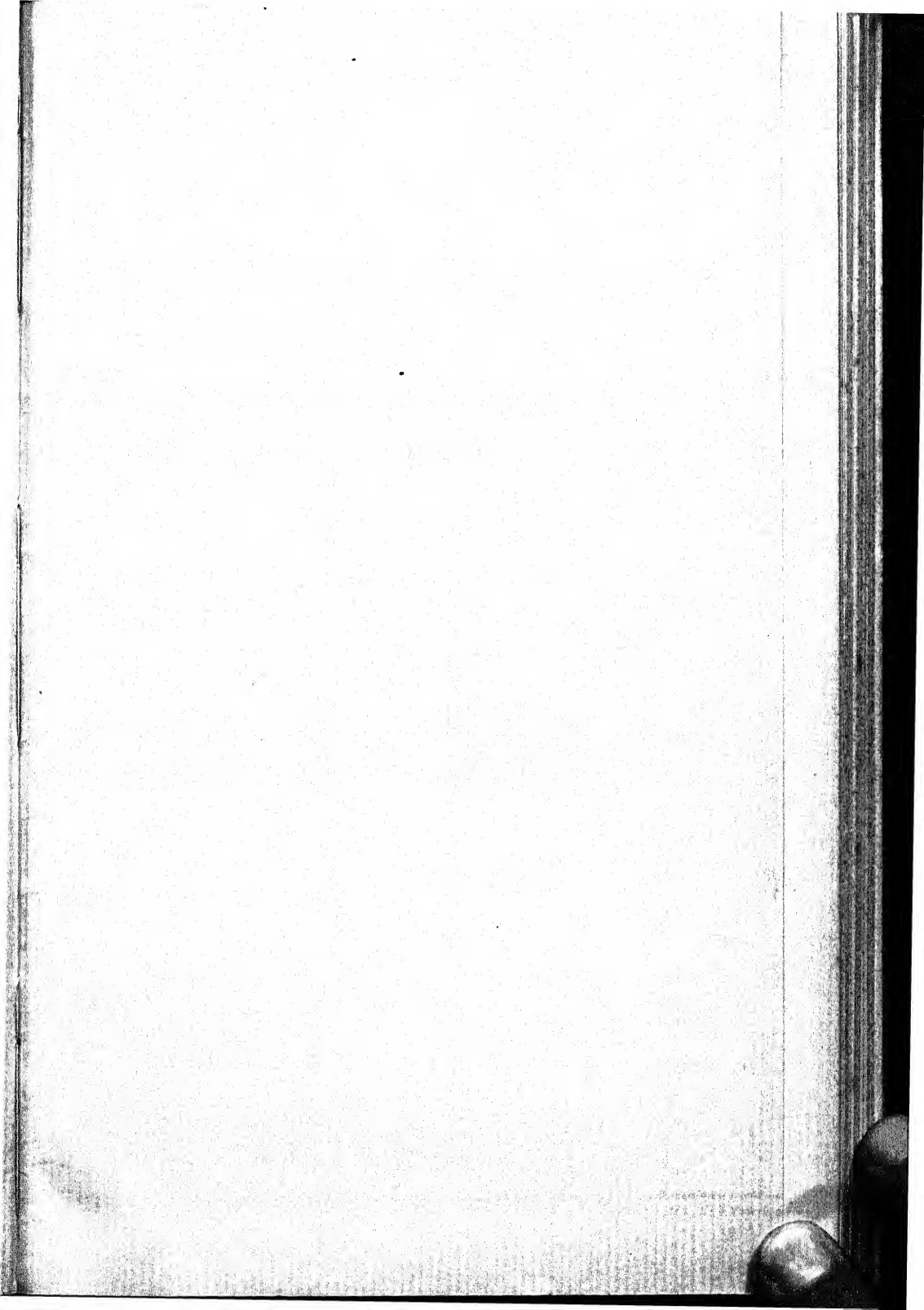
Hooker also sent, at 9 p.m., an order through Butterfield to be delivered to Sedgwick, telling him to cross the river at Fredericksburg on receipt of the order, and to take up his march on the Chancellorsville road at once; he was to attack and destroy any force he met on the road, and be in the vicinity of Hooker at daylight; Gibbon's Division (II Corps) was to take possession of Fredericksburg.

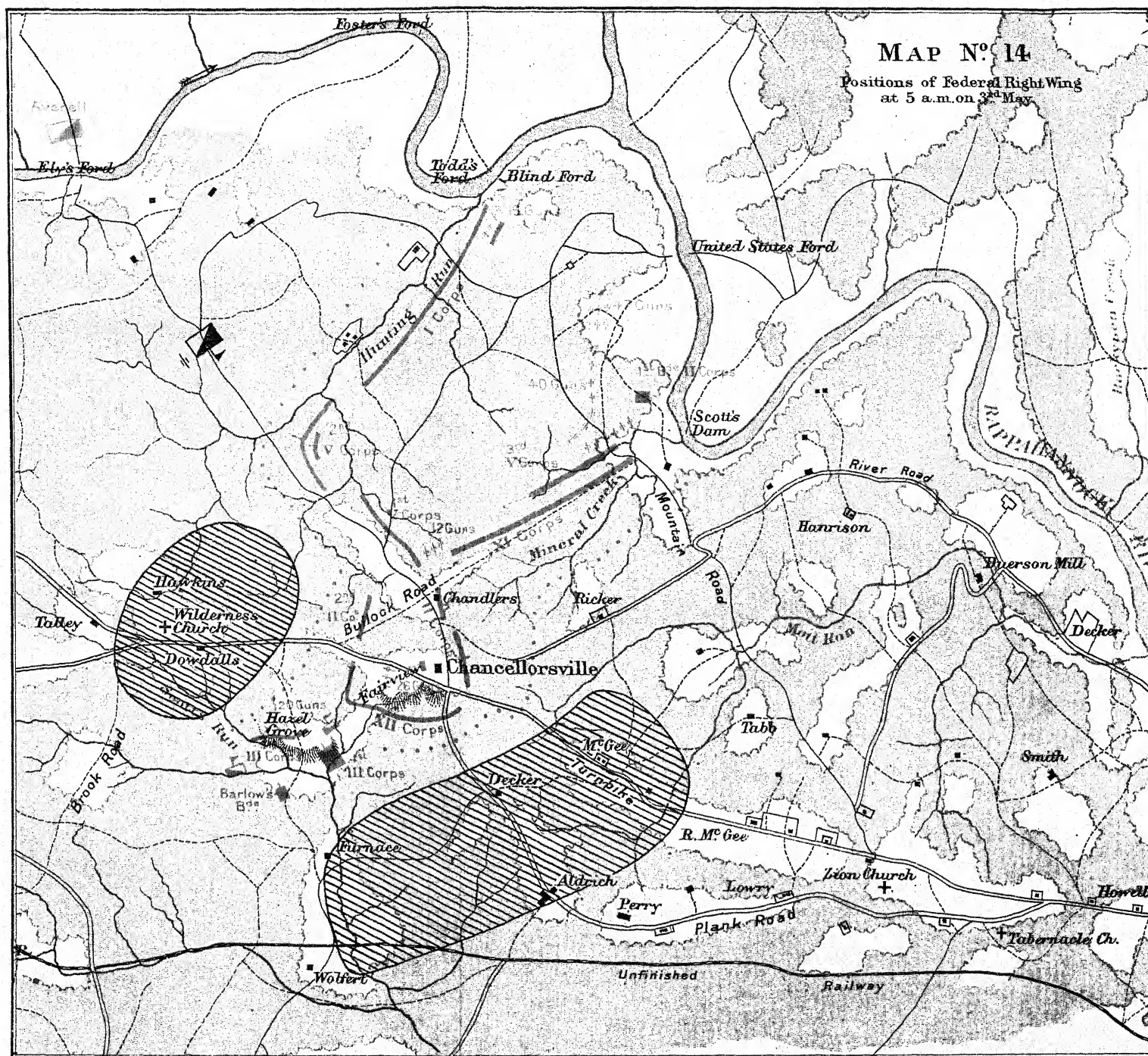
At last Sedgwick was sent a direct order; but the Left Wing no longer consisted of three Corps

—there was only the VI Corps with Sedgwick. Much was expected of this single Corps: it was to do all the attacking while the Right Wing, consisting of the XI, XII, V, III, II, and I Corps, was to sit tight. Not only was the VI Corps to attack, but it was to do so at night. Apparently Hooker was under the impression that the VI Corps was still on the north bank of the river, otherwise he would not have ordered it to cross *at* Fredericksburg; as a matter of fact it had already crossed the river.

Briefly, what had been happening with the Left Wing during the day was this: The I Corps had, as previously explained, been ordered round it to join Hooker, and had left Sedgwick at 10.30 a.m. One Brigade of Gibbon's Division had also been sent to hold Bank's Ford. At 6 p.m. Sedgwick received Hooker's 4 p.m. order (telling him to pursue the enemy, who was fleeing with two of Sickles' Divisions amongst his baggage train): this order, it will be remembered, had been sent off shortly before Jackson developed his great attack.

The 4 p.m. order must have been a great relief to Sedgwick, who must have been left with the impression that a victory had been gained, and all he had to do was to pursue. With such comforting reflections Sedgwick set his Corps in motion, and by 8 p.m. had crossed the river with the intention of advancing as long as it was light







enough to see. No doubt Sedgwick was convinced that all had gone well with the Right Wing, and this belief was confirmed by the movements of the enemy, who had been seen during the day to withdraw troops and march them towards Chancellorsville. As a matter of fact, Early, the Confederate Commander opposed to Sedgwick, had sent off most of his force to reinforce Lee, but had recalled them, as he discovered that he had misunderstood Lee's orders.

At 11 p.m., well into the night—which, however, was a fairly clear one—Sedgwick received Hooker's 9.30 p.m. order, directing him to cross *at* Fredericksburg and march on Chancellorsville, attacking any force he met, and that he was to be in the vicinity of Chancellorsville by daylight.

Sedgwick appears to have been in considerable doubt as to what to do. He was told to cross *at* Fredericksburg, but he was already across the river.

Impossible as it seems, it is reported that he at first seriously thought of recrossing the river, and then recrossing it again at Fredericksburg. The difficulty of laying the pontoons at Fredericksburg, however, decided him against this move, and he ordered a night march along the river against the town.

This seems a curious move. Why should not Sedgwick have continued his attack, which was more or less directed against the flank of the

enemy? Why should he not have marched straight on Chancellorsville by the most direct route? By doing this, surely he would have been carrying out the spirit of his instructions.

Sedgwick's reasons for making this flank march along the river bank are not known. Bigelow, however, suggests two possible arguments that may have influenced Sedgwick. The first of these is that the direct routes to Chancellorsville were not known, and that there were no guides. It may have been thought that once at Fredericksburg the route could not be mistaken, and guides could be obtained. But this seems a poor reason.

The other, and more probable suggestion, is that Sedgwick thought it essential to capture Fredericksburg in order to allow Gibbon's Division to cross. But if the advance had been continued on the original lines, that alone would have obliged the enemy to evacuate Fredericksburg.

As it was, Sedgwick, after occupying the town, would have to force the lines opposite, at Marye's Heights—the very place where Burnside had failed so disastrously.

*May 3.*—I think we must now return to Hooker and the Right Wing, and see what happened to them during the next day (May 3).

Map No. 14 shows the positions at 5 a.m. on the morning of the 3rd.

The points particularly to notice are:

Hooker had taken up, as it were, a second



and inner defensive position, which ran along the Hunting Run and the Mineral Spring. Three Corps were to hold this line, viz.:

The I Corps, which had only taken up its position on the right at 3 a.m., after a twenty-three-mile march from the Left Wing; the troops were fatigued, their loads were heavy, and the men had been marching since 10.30 a.m. (say, sixteen hours).

The V Corps, under Meade, a good man, in the centre.

The XI Corps occupied the extreme left. The Corps had been rallied after its disaster of the previous evening; but the men and officers were much shaken in morale, and would probably not put up a good fight. There were probably only some 5,000 men available in this Corps.

Then notice the position of Sickles' force at Hazel Grove. It threatened the right of Jackson's (now Stuart's) Column on the Pike road, but at the same time it presented its rear to Lee's Column.

Remember that from Hazel Grove guns could sweep the open ground about Fairview. Hostile guns at Hazel Grove would be able to enfilade both the southern and western front of the XII Corps.

Remember that Hooker had sent orders to Sedgwick to advance, and he was expecting him to attack the rear of Lee's Column at any moment. But there was, as yet, no sign of Sedgwick.

We must also remember that the troops were somewhat jumpy.

Still, here we find Hooker's whole mind fixed on the defensive; he was evidently extremely nervous of being cut off from the U.S. Ford, hence the three Corps holding the inner line.

No idea of attacking seems to have entered his brain, yet probably the safest course would have been to attack. It was ridiculous to ask Sedgwick to attack with one Corps, while the whole Right Wing (six Corps) remained behind entrenchments.

What ought Hooker to have done? Would it have been better if he had adopted some such plan as the following?

*The I Corps* instead of being stretched out on a defensive position, to have been massed in rear and to the right of the V Corps.

*The V Corps* to advance to the attack from the position it held, supported by the I Corps.

*Averell's Cavalry*, which, it will be remembered, was at Ely's Ford, to force the river—which would, or should, not have been difficult as Averell had 3,500 troopers—and then operate vigorously on the right flank of the V Corps.

The difficulty of this movement would have been :

The I Corps were tired.

Averell's Cavalry were busy during the night trying to collect their horses, which, as previously explained, had been stampeded the previous evening by a few well directed volleys.

Still, these difficulties were probably not unsurmountable.

As for Sickles, why should not he also have attacked Jackson's Column? It would have been necessary to detach some troops to cover his rear, but probably the best way to do this would have been to threaten Lee by stiffening up the skirmishers in front of the XII Corps (southern face), and doing the same with Hancock's skirmishers along the Pike road. Sickles at Hazel Grove interposed between Lee and Jackson's Column.

Students of war must form their own opinion on the above suggestion.

Hooker's staff work was not good at this time. Butterfield, his Chief-of-the-Staff, was eating his heart out at Falmouth, and Hooker had to put up with another officer, who appears to have been an indifferent substitute. In many ways Butterfield is one of the most interesting personalities on the Federal side. He was a gallant soldier and appears to have done all that he could to carry out Hooker's ideas and to ensure co-operation.

Later in the day he wrote to Hooker, "I am heartsick at not being permitted to be on the actual field, to share the fate and fortune of this Army and my General."

During the night Sickles had sent an A.D.C. to Hooker to report the situation and to ask for instructions. Hooker was asleep—even commanding Generals have to sleep sometimes—and the Staff did not like to wake him up until nearly daylight; he then rode out to see Sickles personally, and ordered him to evacuate Hazel Grove and form up his command behind the troops astride the Pike road facing Jackson's Column.

Sickles, by great good fortune, was able to carry out this movement practically unopposed, as the enemy only advanced in time to harry his rear-guard and capture three guns.

It must be understood that the Federals during the night had been hard at work throwing up entrenchments, most of which were log fences with a clearing of 50 to 100 yards in front of them. The troops on both sides were only just beginning to realise the importance of entrenchments. Later on in the war the rapidity with which field works were thrown up by the men on their own initiative was amazing.

The Federals were not left long in peace, and from about 6.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Stuart made repeated and violent attacks; he pierced the line

at places and was driven out again by counter-attacks; at other places the assaults were repulsed. The fighting was at close quarters and was exceptionally savage.

We read that there were many instances of quite large bodies, such as two regiments, being marched off to the U.S. Ford headed by their officers. Large numbers broke away to the rear. Undoubtedly the Federals were shaken. The enemy had guns on Hazel Grove and about Dowdall's which threw a hail of shot on to the Fairview plateau. But although many men behaved badly, others behaved splendidly.<sup>1</sup>

We read that the Federal Cavalry were asked to perform a curious duty. They were extended across Fairview, with orders to stop and collect the fugitives streaming back from the firing line. A duty which they had also carried out at Malvern Hill.<sup>2</sup>

A colonel of one of the regiments tells us: "I can safely say I never witnessed on any other occasion so perfect a slaughter."

Troops, both Infantry and Artillery, were withdrawn from Hancock's Division and sent in to stem the enemy's advance.

<sup>1</sup> See "Campaign of Chancellorsville," p. 351 *et. seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See "The Subaltern," by G. R. Gleig—page 123—for a description of two Squadrons of British Cavalry stopping fugitives at Arcanques (outside Bayonne), which duty apparently they carried out most effectually by beating the men over the head and shoulders with the flat of their swords.

The details of the fighting are almost impossible to follow, units on both sides being much broken up, owing to the dense woods, the closeness of the fighting, and the mass of individuals wandering about—some of whom had become separated from their units, while others were making the best of their way to the rear.

Ammunition began to run out both for the Infantry and Artillery; when this happened the men and guns usually cleared off out of the firing line. Apparently the only way to replenish the ammunition was to bring up fresh troops. A little forethought and good arrangements for ammunition supply would have obviated this wasteful procedure.

As it was, Hooker had to send all the way back to the U.S. Ford to bring up some batteries of Artillery; they had been sent there in the early morning. See Map No. 14.

All this time, the troops holding the inner line were inactive: a great opportunity for bringing off a decisive counter-stroke with the I and V Corps was being lost. The V Corps sent forward one Brigade (of Humphrey's Division) about 9 a.m. It came into action along the Little Hunting Run, just above where it crosses the Bullock road.

The Federals were, however, being gradually forced back along the Pike road, even the southern face of the XII Corps gave ground under pressure from both Stuart's and Lee's Columns.



About 9 a.m., when affairs were in this critical state, Hooker was on the veranda of the Chancellor's house. He was just leaning over the rail to receive a report, when a solid shot struck one of the pillars of the house; a piece hit him and knocked him senseless. Reports that the Commander-in-Chief had been killed spread rapidly. Rumours of this sort always seem to affect the morale of the troops, who instinctively realise all the confusion that must arise when a new General has suddenly to take over command in the crisis of a battle. But Hooker pulled himself together, mounted his horse, and rode amongst the troops; he was undoubtedly severely shaken, and it must have required no small effort of will on his part.

As a matter of fact what with the shock and the pain Hooker was not in a condition to continue the active control of the fight. He soon had to dismount and was laid on a blanket amidst a storm of shot. While lying there he received his first information about Sedgwick—it was to the effect that the Left Wing was not out of Fredericksburg by 7 a.m.

It must have been the last straw to the wounded General. Hooker telegraphed back that Sedgwick was to attack at once.

We may well ask ourselves how it was that the V and I Corps were left idle spectators of the terrific struggle round Fairview. Meade and



Reynolds, the commanders of the two Corps, asked leave to advance and strike a blow against the enemy's left flank. This shows that it was possible to have made the counter-attack. Judging from the records of the fight, and they are very full, the effect of such a blow might well have been absolutely decisive. But Hooker would not hear of it; his mind appears to have been full of preserving his retirement to the U.S. Ford. The I, V, and XI Corps held a strong line behind the Hunting Run and the Mineral Creek; he thought that they would at any rate be able to hold this line, and that the III, II, and XII Corps would be sure of finding refuge behind them. He would thus be reasonably sure of saving his Army from absolute defeat; no doubt, also, he kept on hoping against hope that Sedgwick would attack Lee's rear at any moment.

A counter-attack by the I and V Corps would, he thought, jeopardise the safety of the whole Army. If the counter-attack failed, what then?

We may be fairly certain that Hooker's decision was based on some such reasoning as this. Try to picture to ourselves what the scene must have been like. Hooker himself was wounded; he was in great pain; imagine his feelings—try and get into our minds the sense of responsibility that must have weighed like a mill-stone round his neck.

If our imaginations are sufficiently vivid, I think it will be realised that a Commander is often

expected to make the most momentous decision of his life under the most trying circumstances imaginable. Such is war. It is for this great trial that we must prepare ourselves.

Hooker was wrong. A great Commander would have been thinking more of defeating the enemy than of securing the retreat to the U.S. Ford. But the main point for soldiers to realise is, that it requires a man of enormous strength of character, a grim, determined fighter, to apply on the battlefield those principles which we quote so light-heartedly in peace.

By 9.45 a.m., that is, after about 3½ hours' fighting, the Federals had lost much ground. They were just holding out round Chancellor's house, but otherwise the Fairview plateau was practically in possession of the enemy, who about this time were also bringing considerable pressure to bear from the left of Lee's Column—thus effecting the junction between Stuart's and Lee's Columns.

It should be noted that to the east of Chancellorsville, the Federals had held their own—the skirmishing line had not even been driven in.

It was about this time (9.30 or 9.45 a.m.) that Hooker definitely decided to fall back behind his inner line. He sent for Couch, and told him to carry out the withdrawal. Those two gallant soldiers, Meade and Reynolds, with the V and I Corps, were still held back, to their great grief—they were both anxious to advance.

The Federal gunners stood, as they always did, stoutly to their work, and did much to cover the retirement. Couch ordered Sickles to withdraw first—then the XII Corps, and finally Hancock. It was a ticklish business, but, as so often happens, officers and men rose to the occasion. Couch, Hancock, and Sickles were all fine fighting men, and set a splendid example.

By about noon, the withdrawal was complete.

It must not be thought that the Confederates were in a much better state than the Federals. There was not much to choose between the troops on both sides; the Federals were driven back after a desperate struggle. If they had been well commanded, there would probably have been another tale to tell.

Take note of this: There were 35,000 fresh troops available to strike a blow for victory. The I and V Corps; the whole of Averell's Brigade (3,500), who had by now reached the U.S. Ford; and part of the XI Corps, who had not been severely engaged the previous day.

The enemy's troops had been marching and fighting, and were dog tired and in great confusion. It wanted but a determined blow to snatch the victory even now. It is hard to blame either Hooker or Couch at this moment; the former was wounded, and the latter did not understand the situation, and thought it his duty to carry out Hooker's last order to withdraw behind

the inner line. If Couch had been a really exceptional leader, he might possibly have risen to the occasion. Hooker, as far as I can ascertain, did not actually hand over the command; he only told Couch to carry out the withdrawal. It would have been better, perhaps, if Hooker had definitely resigned the command until he was fit for duty again.

In the meantime, what of Stoneman and his Cavalry? What of Sedgwick?

As far as Hooker was concerned, Stoneman might just as well have been in heaven—nothing had been heard from him; the enemy appeared oblivious of his existence.

I think I am correct in saying that Hooker must have received about noon this telegram from Butterfield:

“Am signalled that Sedgwick has carried Marye’s Heights, and, officer thinks, captured the guns”—dated 10.50 a.m.

As far as the Right Wing was concerned, no further attack was made by the enemy.

This fact alone might have given an astute Commander a clue as to the true situation: surely it was probable that the slackening of the attack might have been caused by Lee having to make a detachment to meet Sedgwick.

It was no time to sit behind entrenchments. Hooker evidently did not realise that to envelop an enemy it is necessary to keep up relentless

pressure with both wings. He was sailing straight to disaster; first the Left Wing had remained quiescent while the Right Wing was fighting, and now the Right Wing was to remain behind entrenchments while the Left Wing was fighting.

The Confederate Army was more ably commanded. Lee, at any rate, was fighting to win; the risks he took were stupendous, but he took them deliberately. Let us hope England will produce a soldier who can do the like.

## CHAPTER VIII (*continued*)

It is proposed to give only the broadest outline of the rest of the fighting. Having dealt with Hooker's operations with the Right Wing on May 3, we will now follow Sedgwick's movements. We left him just about to start on his advance on Fredericksburg on the night of the 2nd-3rd.

Sedgwick knew that Hooker expected him to be in the neighbourhood of Chancellorsville at daylight (*i.e.* about 5 a.m.) on the 3rd. It is ten miles from Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville—a short distance, but for the presence of the enemy.

Butterfield did his best to urge forward both Sedgwick and Gibbon; for example, at 2.25 p.m. he telegraphed to the former: "Everything in the world depends upon the rapidity and promptness of your movements. Push everything."

As previously mentioned, Gibbon's Division was to cross at Fredericksburg. An attempt was made to lay the pontoon bridges during the night, but failed owing to the fire of the Confederate infantry from the town.



Although Hooker assured Sedgwick that there could only be a small force in front of him, this was far from being Sedgwick's view of the situation. He knew the enemy had been holding from Hamilton's crossing to the river near Beck's Island—a front of 11,500 yards or say  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles; the whole of this front was entrenched.

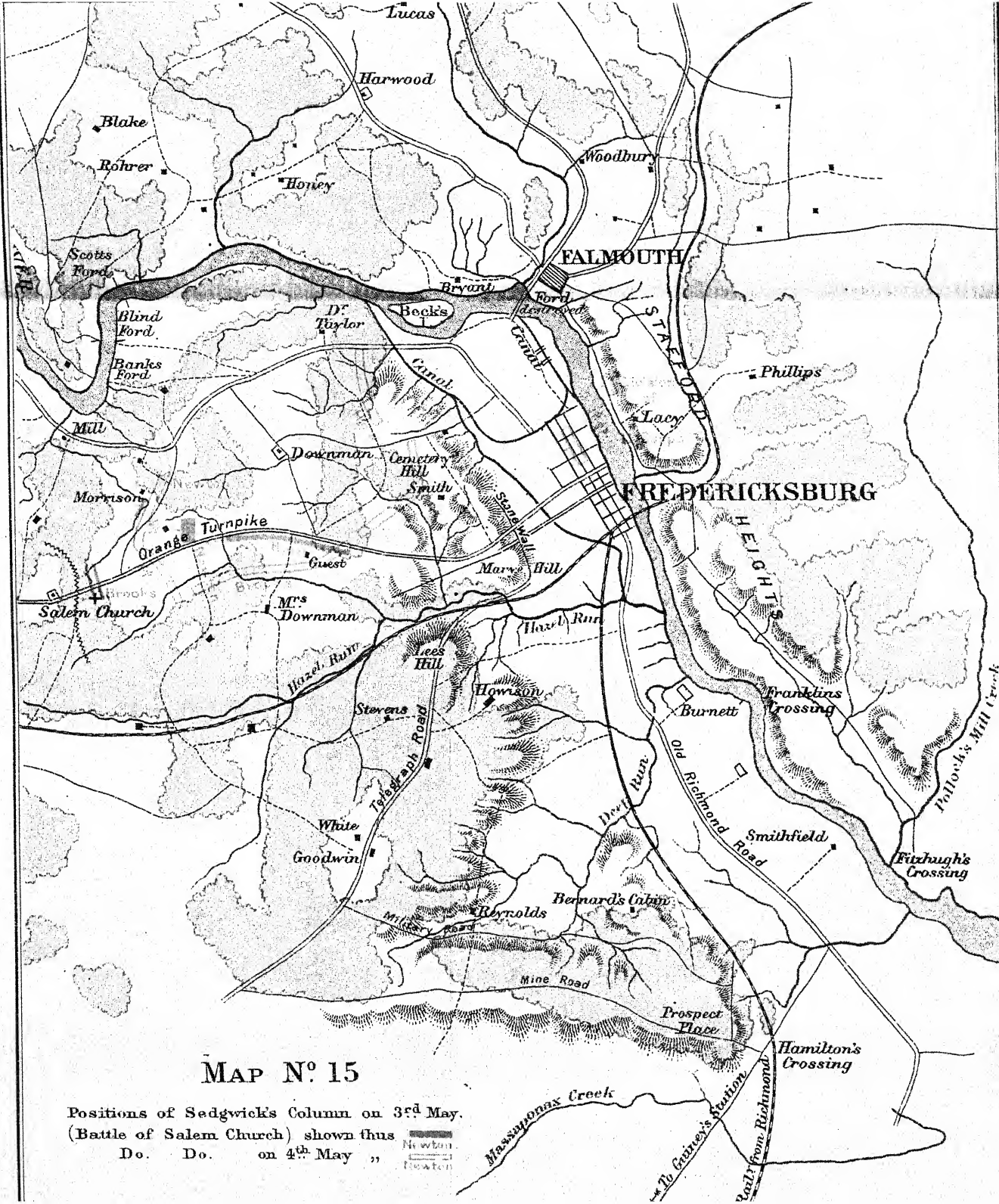
Sedgwick's advance reached the edge of the town about 2 a.m., and he immediately set to work to drive out the enemy. Having accomplished this, he sent a Brigade at 5 a.m. to clear the famous stone wall at the foot of Marye's Heights; the assault was repulsed with loss.

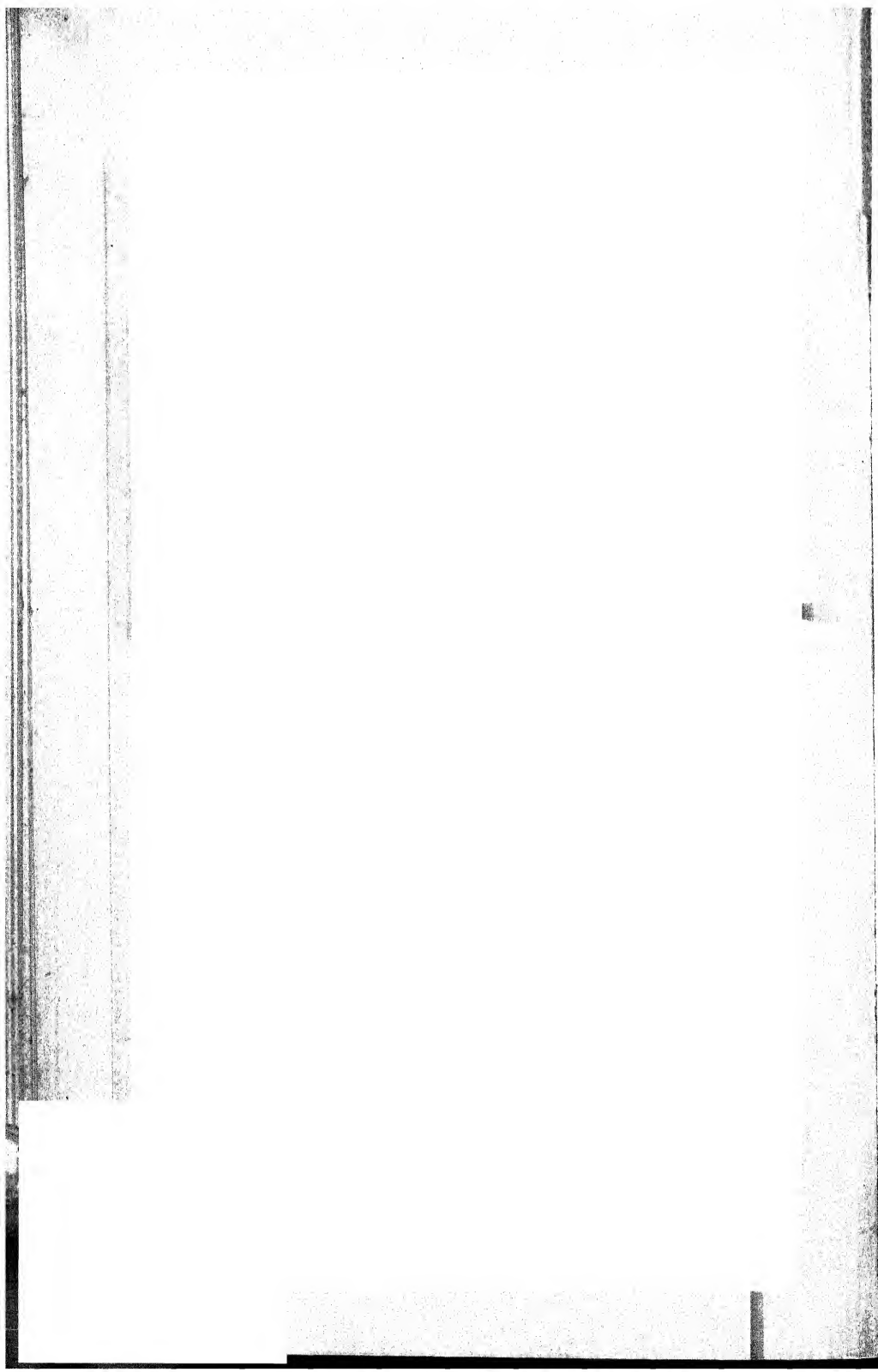
The bridges at Franklin's Crossing had been taken up and relaid opposite Fredericksburg by 6.30 a.m., and Gibbon then crossed. This brought Sedgwick's force up to about 25,000 men and 66 guns (say 2·3 men per yard of front); we know *now* that Early, the Confederate General, had only 11,600 men with which to oppose him (say 1 man per yard).<sup>1</sup>

Sedgwick now began to prepare for a general advance; the intention being that Gibbon should turn the enemy's left and another Division the right of the stone wall. Gibbon, however, found it impossible to cross the canal (30 feet broad and 6 feet deep) under the enemy's Artillery fire; while the attack on the other flank was exposed to a flanking fire from Lee's Hill. At 10.30 a.m.

<sup>1</sup> Authority, Steele's "American Campaigns."







the second assault was made on the stone wall between the Pike and Telegraph roads—this time by 4,700 men. The assault was again repulsed. While the wounded were being collected under a flag of truce, the Federals discovered that there really were very few men holding the stone wall; encouraged by this knowledge they renewed the assault, and this time with success. The time was now about 11 a.m., and the VI Corps had lost about 1,500 men.

The enemy retreated in two bodies; one along the Pike road towards Chancellorsville, the other, and apparently the larger, along the Telegraph road. If Sedgwick had been fighting an independent battle, he would have been able to follow the Confederates down the Telegraph road; but his orders required him to move on Chancellorsville, which necessitated leaving the bulk of his immediate enemy on his left.

The advance was, therefore, continued along the Pike road for about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles; there a halt took place to allow the VI Corps to close up and to relieve the leading Division. All this took time and it was just on 2.30 p.m. before Sedgwick resumed his advance. Gibbon remained in occupation of Marye's and the adjacent heights. Sedgwick had wasted three hours by halting; time was precious and he was already late. Considering the long delay that had taken place before the stone wall, the troops should have closed up at

Fredericksburg and there should have been no necessity to close up again, and it is at least open to question whether it was advisable to relieve the leading Division—a lengthy business. Gibbon apparently remained behind, in order to secure Fredericksburg and the bridges—was this necessary? Sedgwick required every available man for the fighting that was before him; and communications with the opposite bank of the river could have been maintained just as well by Bank's Ford as by Fredericksburg. The former ford was opened up by Sedgwick's advance, and orders had been sent to lay down a bridge there at once. Taking these circumstances into consideration, it would have been better if Gibbon had remained with Sedgwick.

There is little doubt Sedgwick knew that Hooker and the Right Wing had been fighting hard since 6 a.m., and that Hooker was acting on the defensive.

About 3.30 p.m. Sedgwick's advanced troops encountered the enemy, who were drawn up in strength astride the road at Salem Church, their front being covered by entrenchments. He was now only six miles from Chancellorsville. The main body of the enemy must obviously be somewhere between the Right and Left Wings. What would have happened if Hooker had advanced even now?

Sedgwick's situation was as shown in Map No. 15.

The leading Division (Brooks') attacked—met with some success at first, but by 6.30 p.m. was driven back by a determined counter-attack. Newton's Division came up too late to support the attack and only arrived in time to check the Confederate pursuit.

At first, Sedgwick proposed to renew the attack with Newton's Division, but the plan was abandoned on discovering that Howe's Division had gone into bivouac (without orders) and could not be collected in time to support Newton.

The troops went into bivouac for the night. It will be remembered that Sedgwick's orders were to be in the neighbourhood of Chancellorsville by daylight, yet here he was at dusk still six or seven miles away.

It will, of course, be noticed also that the Federal attacks, both at Fredericksburg and Salem Church, were made with only a small portion of the available force—isolated, unsupported efforts, which are such a fruitful source of disaster in war. We can learn something from this. Attention has already been called to the error in leaving Gibbon's Division behind at Fredericksburg.

In justice to Sedgwick and his troops we ought, however, to bear in mind that the men of the VI Corps had fought steadily, and man for man had done just as well as the Confederates. Also, Sedgwick knew he was taking great risks; he knew he might find himself opposed by the bulk

of Lee's Army, as, owing to the passive attitude of the Right Wing, it was quite possible for Lee to have left a few men to hold Hooker and concentrated all the rest of his Army against the Left Wing.

We read that Sedgwick passed the night practically without sleep—he was anxious, and with good reason. He was under the impression that Lee had been reinforced by at least 15,000 men from Richmond (Pickett's and Hood's Divisions).

Butterfield suggested to Hooker at 4 p.m. that Gibbon should push on after Sedgwick—which, like many of Butterfield's suggestions, was quite sound. Hooker, however, said Gibbon was to remain, his idea being not so much to hold the heights as to hold the town and protect the bridges in case Sedgwick had to retire that way. The same dangerous tendency influenced Hooker's actions during the Chancellorsville fighting: he was always trying to make himself absolutely safe. We have seen how this panned out with the Right Wing, and much the same happened now with the Left Wing.

As a matter of fact a bridge had already been laid (at 4 p.m.) at Bank's Ford, and afforded a shorter and more suitable line of communication either for retirement or for sending over reinforcements.

Like Hooker, Sedgwick found that he was



handicapped by the absence of mounted troops. He found it difficult either to cover his own column or to locate the enemy. Do not forget that Sedgwick was aware that a large force (say 5000 to 8000 men) had retired down the Telegraph road—this column might at any moment return and either attack Gibbon or Sedgwick's left and rear. It was this latter plan that Lee had in his mind, and he wrote both to Early and McLaws to that effect.

This ended the fighting on May 3. The following telegrams which during the day passed between Lincoln and Butterfield are of interest:—

*Lincoln to Butterfield.*

4.35 p.m. "Where is General Hooker? Where is Sedgwick? Where is Stoneman?"

*Butterfield to Lincoln.*

4.40. p.m. "General Hooker is at Chancellorsville. General Sedgwick with 15,000 to 20,000 men, at a point 3 or 4 miles out from Fredericksburg on the Chancellorsville Road. Lee is in between. Stoneman has not been heard from."

Perhaps it would be as well if we remained with Sedgwick and continued his story. We are more or less in what might be called the Sedgwick atmosphere, and it would make it unreal if we lifted the fog of war; we can probably learn

more by looking at the situation as it presented itself to Sedgwick.

*May 4.*—At 1.30 a.m. Sedgwick wrote to Hooker, saying: "We have been checked at Salem Church. I believe the enemy have been receiving reinforcements all night, and will attack me in the morning. How do matters stand with you? Send me instructions."

At 6.30 a.m. he wrote to Butterfield:

"I am anxious to hear from General Hooker. There is a strong force in front of me, strongly posted. I cannot attack with any hope of dislodging them until I know something definite as to the position of their main body and ours. I have sent two or three messages to Bank's Ford, but none have returned, nor have I heard from the General since yesterday."

A few minutes after sending off the above he received the following message from General Warren (Chief Topographical Engineer):

"H.Q. I find everything snug here. We contracted the line a little, and repulsed the assault with ease. General Hooker wishes them to attack him to-morrow. If they will, he does not desire you to attack them again in force unless he attacks him at the same time.<sup>1</sup> He says you are too far away for him to direct. Look well to the safety of your Corps, and keep up communication

<sup>1</sup> A peculiarly involved sentence, to say the least of it. Presumably it should read, . . . "unless Hooker attacks them at the same time."

with Bank's Ford and Fredericksburg. You can go to either place if you think it best. To cross at Bank's Ford would bring you in supporting distance of the main body, and would be better than falling back to Fredericksburg."

It is of interest to see how this message came to be sent. Bigelow tells us that Warren had accompanied Sedgwick's advance during the day, and had crossed at Bank's Ford as soon as Sedgwick had opened that passage. He had then ridden on by the United States Ford and arrived at Hooker's headquarters about 10 p.m. Hooker was asleep, and no one liked to wake him up. Warren, knowing how Sedgwick was longing for news and instructions, discussed the situation with Hooker's Staff, and sent off this misleading message. As a matter of fact, however, Hooker confirmed it in the morning.

About this time, *i.e.* 6.30 a.m., or possibly a little earlier, Sedgwick heard that the enemy, 15,000 strong from the direction of Richmond, had occupied the heights of Fredericksburg, thus cutting off his communications with that place. Gibbon had fallen back into the town itself.

The enemy were still in occupation of the ground they had held the previous evening about Salem Church, and now they were threatening Sedgwick's rear from the direction of Fredericksburg. To meet this latter move, one of the Divisions (Howe) had taken up a position with

its left extended to the river, so as to cover the bridges at Bank's Ford (see Map No. 15). A certain amount of bickering was already taking place on Howe's front.

Let us put ourselves in Sedgwick's place. He was facing in three directions, a front of 6,500 yards (three men a yard); he was convinced that the enemy had been reinforced both from Chancellorsville and from Richmond; his reports at the time say that he thought the enemy in his front were 40,000 strong; he felt sure that he would be savagely attacked at any moment. He must have felt that the only chance of success was for Hooker to advance with the Right Wing. Yet he now knew that Hooker was sitting placidly behind his entrenchments waiting for an attack which was not likely to take place.

It must have been an exasperating situation.

A little later, say 8 a.m., Hooker inquired as to his exact situation, and wished to know whether he could sustain himself. To this Sedgwick answered at 9 a.m., saying "the enemy were pressing . . . and it depends upon the condition and position of *your* force whether I can sustain myself here"<sup>1</sup>—which was perfectly true, although Hooker was so engrossed in his own immediate difficulties that he did not apparently grasp the fact.

During the morning various messages were

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.—J. G.

received from Hooker, at first urging Sedgwick, if he fell back, to hold a position to cover the bridges; but later (from 11 to 1) to the effect that he was not to cross the river unless compelled to do so. Sedgwick was also informed that if Hooker could obtain the necessary information he proposed to advance *the next day*, and that Sedgwick must not count on much assistance unless Hooker heard heavy firing. Not a very cheery outlook.

Skirmishing went on all the morning and well into the afternoon. It was not till 5.30 p.m. that the storm burst.

We know now that Lee himself came and examined Sedgwick's position; that he left only Stuart's Column to contain Hooker, while with the remainder of his Army he decided to crush Sedgwick. Hooker's passive attitude allowed these plans to mature at leisure. There was considerable delay caused by the difficulty in locating Sedgwick's exact line—hence the constant reconnaissances; also there was some difficulty in getting the reinforcements into the required positions for the attack.

As far as Sedgwick was concerned, the attack was ushered in, at 5.30 p.m., by three gunshots; the main brunt of the blow fell on the left and centre; the fighting was severe, but the Federals fought well, and had lost very little ground by 6.45 p.m., by which time it was getting dark.

Sedgwick now decided to withdraw closer to Bank's Ford. The two Divisions on his right went first, as it was easier to break off the fight on that flank. Howe's Division on the extreme left held its ground until the other two Divisions had taken up their new line. The movement was executed successfully, which was a good performance, as it was a dark, foggy night. The enemy did not follow up at all closely.

Here in the dark, with his troops holding a line on the south bank so as to cover the bridges, Sedgwick must have breathed a sigh of relief. Things might well have been much worse, but the position was, of course, still extremely critical. We must remember that the losses had been heavy; the VI Corps had lost by now close on 5,000 men (including some 1,400 prisoners); still they had inflicted just as great losses on the enemy, which is always a comforting reflection to the troops.

At 11.50 that night (May 4) Sedgwick wrote to Hooker: "My Army is hemmed in upon the slope, covered by the guns from the north side of Bank's Ford. If I had only this Army to care for, I would withdraw it to-night. Do your operations require that I should jeopard it by retaining it here? An immediate reply is indispensable, or I may feel obliged to withdraw."

After sending this message Sedgwick had a talk to a personal friend (General Benham), who



cautioned him not to withdraw without Hooker's permission.<sup>1</sup> He therefore wrote to Hooker: "I shall hold my position, as ordered, on south of Rappahannock." It was thought that the messenger would overtake the previous one before the latter could reach the telegraph office, but he did not.

May 5, about 1.30 a.m.—A reply was received from Hooker:

"1 a.m. Dispatch this moment received. Withdraw. Cover the river and prevent any force crossing. Acknowledge this."

Sedgwick immediately set his troops in motion, and apparently the movement was carried out with remarkable promptness.

About 2 or 2.15 a.m.—Another message arrived:

"1.20 a.m. Yours received, saying you should hold position. Order to withdraw countermanded. Acknowledge both."

To which Sedgwick answered:

"2.30 a.m. Yours just received, countermanding order to withdraw. Almost my whole command has crossed over."

Here we see the confusion caused by messages taking a long time to pass between the Right and Left Wings.

The fact that Hooker at first said "withdraw" and twenty minutes later "hold position," shows that he had no very clear plan of operations in

<sup>1</sup> Authority: "The Campaign of Chancellorsville."

his mind. The fact is, if Hooker meant to attack with his Right Wing, then Sedgwick should have been told to hold his position; if, on the other hand, the Right Wing was to remain quiescent, then the sooner Sedgwick withdrew, the better.

Sedgwick in his answer does not say what he is going to do. He simply acknowledges the order, says most of his command is already across, but leaves it to Hooker's imagination to divine whether the troops will go back again or not. Also it passes belief that Sedgwick could possibly have got many men across the river in half or three-quarters of an hour (*i.e.* the time between receipt of the two orders). It is more probable that he was really extremely anxious to reach safety on the north bank, and was only too eager to jump at any excuse for disobeying the last order. It is probable that he had lost all confidence in Hooker, and was convinced that the latter would not really advance with the Right Wing.

Anyhow, by 7 a.m. Sedgwick's whole Corps was in bivouac about one mile north of the river, and the pontoon bridges taken up.

Let us now return to Hooker. It will be remembered that we left him on the evening of May 3 with the Right Wing driven back within the inner line of entrenchments along the Hunting Run and Mineral Spring Creek.

On the 3rd, as we know, Sedgwick with the

VI Corps had advanced from Fredericksburg, and late in the afternoon fought his engagement at Salem Church. Hooker had been driven in on the morning of the 3rd, but the attack had been discontinued about midday, and during the afternoon no fighting took place, except for some isolated reconnaissances along Hooker's line of battle.

*May 4.*—On the 4th, the Right Wing continued inactive all day behind their entrenchments. Hooker apparently expected, he says he hoped, to be attacked; and Sedgwick was under orders to advance *if* this happened. Later in the day, Hooker told Sedgwick that he proposed to advance with the Right Wing next day (the 5th).

In the meantime it was known that Sedgwick was held up, and in the evening the roar of his guns could be heard. Still Hooker remained absolutely unmoved.

*May 5.*—At midnight the 4th-5th, Hooker called together most of his Corps Commanders. He wished for their opinion on the situation. He made it clear that he doubted the steadiness of some of the troops, and that he was in favour of withdrawal. He seems to have forgotten that Sedgwick had been told the Right Wing was going to advance in the morning.

The Corps Commanders were divided in their opinions. Three—Meade (V Corps), Reynolds (I Corps), and Howard (XI Corps), voted for

an advance. Two—Couch (II Corps), and Sickles (III Corps) for a withdrawal.<sup>1</sup>

Hooker decided to withdraw.

Couch tells us that he voted for a withdrawal when he discovered that Hooker proposed to take personal command. He says that under such a commander as Hooker an advance would have meant disaster!

During the short campaign of Chancellorsville, Hooker had made many mistakes, but it is doubtful whether he made a greater mistake than when he decided to withdraw.

He had 75,500 men, and there was nothing to stop him bringing the VI Corps (Sedgwick's) across the U. S. Ford, if he so desired.

We now know that Lee was spending the day making preparations to assault Hooker. It is almost impossible to believe that Lee's 35,000—40,000 men would have been able to carry Hooker's line held by 75,000 men. It is almost a certainty that it would have ended in as bloody a repulse as that on Malvern Hill.

During the day some eighty guns crossed the

<sup>1</sup> These votes are curious. I do not know on what arguments the officers based their opinions, but it seems almost as though the personal point of view had influenced their decisions. Meade and Reynolds had not been engaged, and must have wished that their commands should at least have a chance of saving the situation. Howard may have been anxious that his Corps might have an opportunity of retrieving their disgrace. Couch and Sickles, on the other hand, had both been severely engaged and, at any rate, the honour of their Corps was untarnished.

U. S. Ford and took up positions on the far bank to cover the retirement. The Corps Commanders were ordered to send every spare vehicle across.

A Cavalry Brigade and an Infantry Battalion were also sent across and posted so as to hold the fords above the U.S. Ford as far as the O. and A. railway. (Hooker was nervous that the enemy might make a turning movement in that direction.)

The remainder of the Cavalry was sent down to watch the river below Falmouth.

The only other incident worth mentioning was the departure of some time-expired men, who insisted on claiming their rights and being sent home to be mustered out.

That evening (5th), as soon as it became dark, 7.15 p.m., the Army began crossing. It was raining hard, which must have added to the general despondency. To make matters worse the river rose rapidly, and at one time the bridges were in considerable danger of being washed away. The movement had to be suspended while the bridges were repaired.

All through the dark the troops were passed over the river, but it soon became obvious that the movement could not be completed by daylight.

There was a huge mass of men waiting at the bridge head, while the V Corps held an entrenched position as a rear-guard,

It would have taken very little to create a panic if by any chance the Confederates had attacked at this juncture, although undoubtedly the Artillery on the north bank would have greatly assisted the Federals.

Fortune, however, favoured Hooker, and the last troops were across by 9 a.m., May 6.

Thus ended the Chancellorsville campaign.

With muttered curses and indignant hearts, the army of the Potomac returned to its old bivouacs. The men had consistently fought well, but had been grossly mishandled by their Commander-in-Chief.

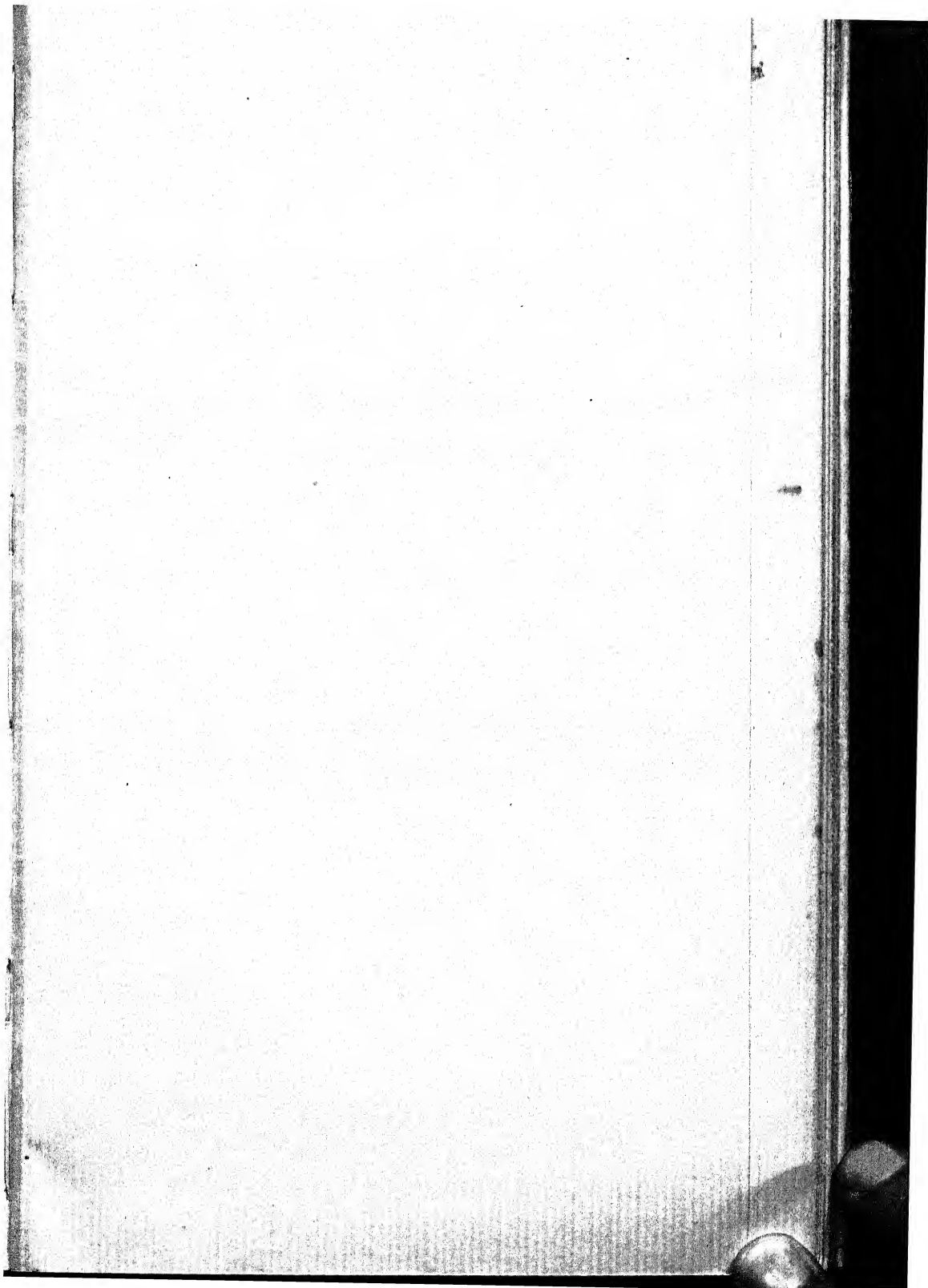
The XI Corps certainly had done badly, but when all is said and done we can hardly blame the men of the Corps; they had been placed in a hopeless position and their Corps Commander and Hooker were the true culprits.

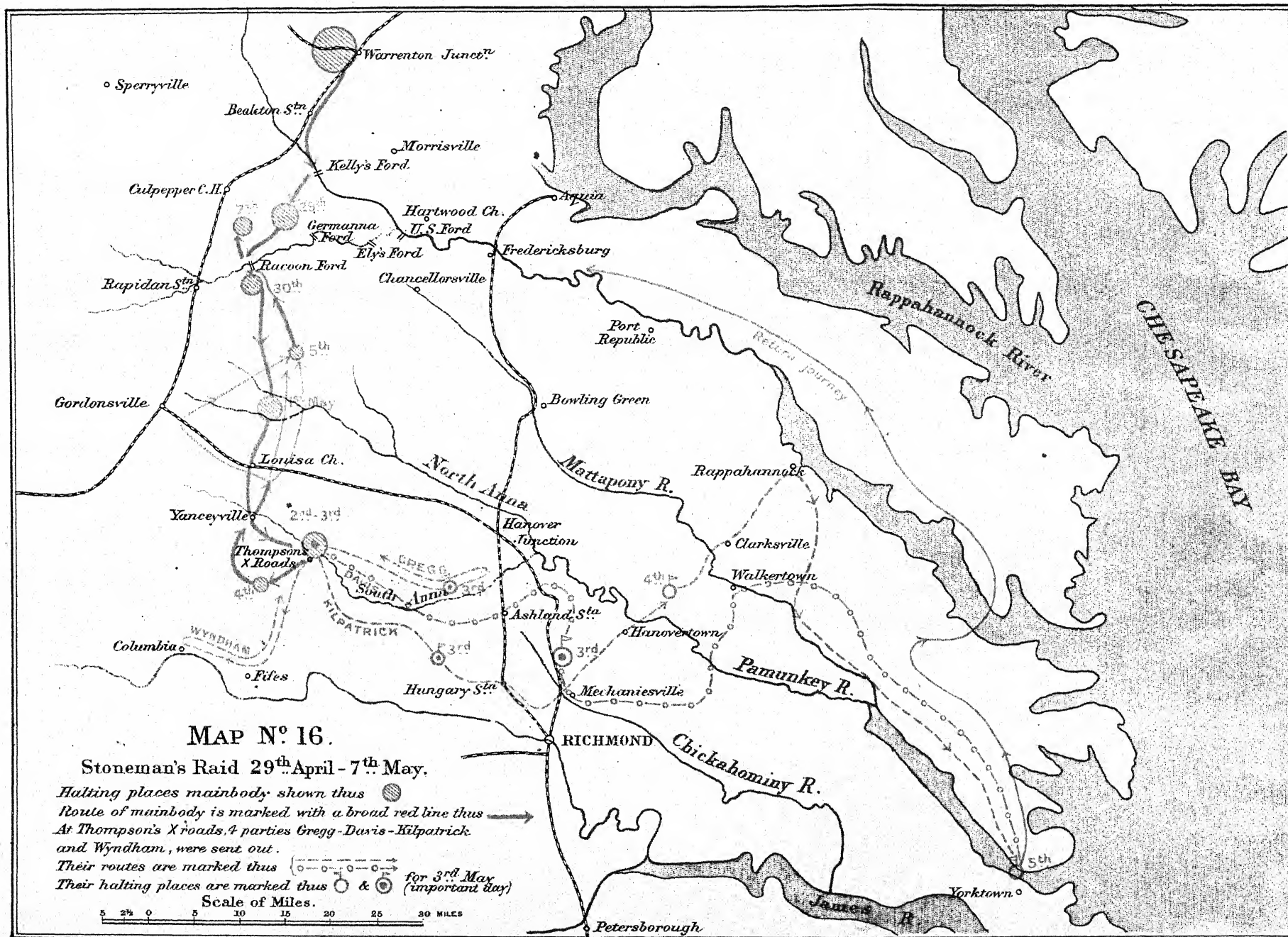
Apparently it was said at the time that Hooker was drunk during the fighting, but there was no truth in this. Couch, who had a caustic pen, says that Hooker "had abstained from the use of ardent spirits, but that it would have been better if he had continued in his usual habit in that respect."<sup>1</sup>

Before closing our study of the campaign, perhaps we ought to follow out the Cavalry movements under Stoneman. They had practically no effect on the main operations and, as

<sup>1</sup> "Battles and Leaders," vol. iii, p. 170.







far as I can ascertain, Hooker, all through the desperate fighting which had taken place round Chancellorsville, remained in complete ignorance of what had happened to his mounted troops.

#### STONEMAN'S OPERATIONS

Map No. 16 should enable us to follow Stoneman's story.

As previously stated, Hooker had ordered Stoneman on April 12 to march the next day (the 13th), from his camps about Falmouth, "with the primary object of cutting the enemy's connection with Richmond by the Fredericksburg route, checking his retreat over those lines and inflicting on him every injury which will tend to his discomfiture and defeat."

Hooker suggested that the Rappahannock should be crossed somewhere west of the Orange and Alexandria railway, and informed Stoneman that F. Lee's Cavalry Brigade, about 2,000 strong, was believed to be about Culpeper C. H., and he was expected to disperse and destroy this force, without "delay to his advance or detriment to any considerable number of his command." Railway bridges, telegraph line, and supply depots were to be destroyed *en route*. If the enemy retired on Richmond, which Hooker considered probable, Stoneman was to delay the enemy by

taking up positions, or by so harassing his flanks as to reduce him to exhaustion.

If the enemy retired on Gordonsville and Culpeper, Stoneman was to hold the enemy in front and harass him day and night. Finally he was told "if you cannot cut off from his columns large slices, the General desires that you will not fail to take small ones."

So, we see from this, much was expected from Stoneman—and it will be noticed it was rather taken for granted that the enemy would retire—and retire quickly. Like most of Hooker's expectations, this was not realised.

A Brigade of Infantry was sent to Kelly's Ford and a regiment to the United States Ford on the 13th, with the object of covering the Cavalry movement.

It is curious to read Hooker's exhortation to Stoneman; he said: "Bear in mind that celerity, audacity, and resolution are everything in war."

All soldiers will agree with this, but it gives us food for thought when we find that Hooker was thoroughly aware of these sound military principles. Yet, within a few days of giving utterance to them he had demonstrated their truth by being badly defeated because he did not apply them himself.

It just shows us that the knowledge of military principles is only a small part of the business of war. They are of no value unless we apply them,

and we must realise that when the crisis arises in war we must act. Indeed, if we do not act, and that quickly, defeat is staring us in the face. Victory can only be gained by prompt and resolute action.

It is so easy to reel off principles and to talk of resolution in peace. It is so difficult in war to take risks when our information is vague, and the dangers in front of us loom large. I do not know how we can prepare ourselves; but my belief is that much can be done by schooling ourselves to a true conception of war—its horrors—its uncertainty; and we can perhaps train ourselves to realise that we must sooner or later put our trust in the God of Battles and risk everything.

To return to Stoneman's Cavalry:

On arrival about Rappahannock Station, with the intention of crossing the river on the morning of April 15, and breaking up the Richmond-Fredericksburg railway on the 17th, it was found that the elements made such a movement impossible. As previously explained, there was a violent rainstorm, which commenced on the evening of the 14th and continued without ceasing for 36 hours, and the river was coming down over its banks—even quite small streams were "swimming"—one soldier being drowned crossing a small stream which could have been walked across a few hours before.

The roads, also, were, of course, in a shocking

state. The upshot of the matter was that the move had to be postponed—until the country was passable.

Difficulty immediately arose about feeding the Cavalry Force. The supply situation was this :

The Cavalry consisted of approximately 10,000 men and 12,000 horses and mules.

Five days' rations and five days' "short forage" (*i.e.* grain) were to be taken on the raid.

This reserve had to be kept up. The Q.M.G. (Chief Quartermaster) sent a supply convoy of 275 wagons to Bealeton Station (six miles north of the river) on the O. and A. Railway. The wagons were emptied and issued to units, the empty wagons returning at once, as they were urgently needed for the supply of the Infantry Corps.

It was at first hoped that the railway from Alexandria could be used, but the bridge at Bull's Run had been carried away in the storm. So the Chief Quartermaster had to arrange to send another convoy of 180 grain wagons, which arrived on April 18.

The railway to Alexandria was opened on the 23rd, which enabled full rations and forage to be issued.

In the meantime the rain had continued, off and on, and the river remained impassable till April 28.

As we know, Hooker moved his Infantry Corps on the 27th—three Corps crossing the Rappahannock on the morning of the 29th.



On the 27th Stoneman was ordered to meet Hooker at a place called Morrisville, 13 miles west of Warrenton Junction, having previously been told to be ready to move on the 29th.

At 5.45 p.m. on the 28th, Stoneman met Hooker at Morrisville. He was there given his Instructions (a copy of which can be found on p. 1065 Official Records XXV, Part I), which told him to carry out his previous instructions, except that a portion of his force was to move towards Louisa C. H., with the object of dealing with the enemy's Cavalry known to be about Culpeper, and containing the garrison at Gordonsville, while the remainder of the force were to act against the Aquia and Richmond Railway. The Cavalry were to be across the river by 8 a.m. next day (29th), using the fords, if possible, otherwise to use the pontoon bridge which was being laid at Kelly's Ford.

The Instructions to the Cavalry were vaguely worded, and moreover it was found impossible to get the Cavalry across the river by the hour named.

It is worth our while considering this, as it was greatly a matter of Staff Duties, and the difficulty should have been foreseen.

To begin with, Stoneman should have been warned that he would have to move on the evening of the 28th; he would then have been able to make the necessary preparations. As it was, he was only warned to be ready to move on the morning of the 29th.

Stoneman had to ride back thirteen miles to his Cavalry Headquarters ; he then sent out to call in his picquets, some of them another thirteen miles away. The night was getting on by the time the Command was assembled. It was foggy and dark, and the roads were still bad from the recent rains. The result was that it was 8 a.m. (29th) before the river was reached. The fords were still high—too high for the pack mules and Artillery—and consequently the Cavalry were marched to the ford and pontoon bridge at Kelly's Ford. Here they found the Infantry Corps in the act of crossing—it was not till 5 p.m. (29th) that all the Cavalry Corps were across the river.

Much time had been lost. The Cavalry had been on the move for about twenty-one hours, and had only covered seventeen miles. The march of the Infantry over the pontoon bridge had been interfered with. All these troubles can be directly attributed to bad Staff work, and it should also bring home to us that a large Cavalry force cannot be moved about like a pin on a map, especially if it happens to be holding a long picquet line, which has to be collected before the march can be properly commenced.

The Cavalry halted, as shown on Map No. 16, just beyond the river.

General Averell (with his Division and one Brigade) was detached on his mission to push in the direction of Culpeper with the object of

dealing with F. Lee's Cavalry Brigade, reported in that neighbourhood. Averell had about 3,400 sabres and six guns.

Stoneman with the remainder, some 4,300 sabres and 4,800 horses (*i.e.* Gregg's Division and Buford's Reserve Brigade) was to move forward to carry out the main task of destroying the communications between Richmond and Fredericksburg, and of harassing and delaying the enemy's retreat from in front of Hooker.

Stoneman's further movements can best be followed by a reference to Map No. 16.

It will be noticed that on the 30th he marched only about eight miles, although he met no enemy, except a small picquet at Racoon Ford on the Rapidan.

About eighteen miles were covered on the 1st. The march was not opposed, but tracks were passed showing that some of the enemy's mounted troops had moved towards Fredericksburg.

On the 2nd Stoneman reached Thompson's Cross Roads—about a twenty-one mile march.

Here, to use Stoneman's own words, "I determined to make the most of my 3,500 men.<sup>1</sup> I called my regimental Commanders together, and explained what I wished done. I gave them to understand that we had dropped in that region of country like a shell, and that I intended to burst it in every direction, expecting each piece

<sup>1</sup> Really over 4,000 men.

or fragment would do as much harm and create nearly as much terror as would result from sending the whole shell, and thus magnify our small force into overwhelming numbers."

Stoneman burst his shell by sending off four main parties (see Map No. 16) and two or three small parties.

Stoneman himself remained with what was left of his shell—*i.e.* about 500 men and 200 broken-down horses—at Thompson's Cross Roads, waiting to be rejoined by the fragments which were to carry such fear and destruction throughout the countryside.

He says he passed the day and night of May 3 in no little anxiety, which is not surprising, as if the enemy's Cavalry had turned up he would have been mopped up fragment by fragment. But the Confederate Cavalry had, as we know now, more important work in hand. They had rejoined Lee, and were actively co-operating in the main battle, leaving only one Brigade to deal as best they could with Stoneman, and to protect their railway and stores about Culpeper and Gordonsville.

We need not enter into the details of the work accomplished by Stoneman's four parties; they rode hastily through the country along the routes shown on the map, and such bridges as were not held (or only weakly guarded) were destroyed.

Some of Kilpatrick's troopers actually rode

through the Richmond defences, but, beyond riding through and spreading a certain amount of alarm, they did no damage. The railways were working again in a few days, so the damage done cannot have been of a serious nature.

Davis and Kilpatrick, with a regiment apiece, eventually fetched up at Gloucester Point. As Kilpatrick puts it: "At 10 a.m. on the 7th, I found safety and rest under our brave old flag within our lines at Gloucester Point." Kilpatrick's losses were 38, Davis' 35.

In the meantime Stoneman waited about Thompson's Cross Roads, and was rejoined by Gregg and Wyndham, the latter having damaged the James' Canal, but failed to destroy the aqueduct across the canal as it was of much too solid a nature for the means at his disposal. But he made up for this failure by destroying—to use his own words—"the large and elegant bridge" across the James River near Columbia.

The question was, what was Stoneman to do? There were no signs of the enemy retreating before Hooker; and if he did, what could Stoneman do with just over 3,000 men, the remainder of his force having disappeared into the unknown? He decided to go back.

The return journey was commenced on May 5. Stoneman was nervous that the enemy had a large force at Gordonsville and he sent a portion

of his force, under Buford, to protect the march of the remainder.

Eventually he recrossed the Rapidan at Racoon Ford on the morning of May 7, having heard rumours the previous day of the repulse and withdrawal of Hooker's Army.

This briefly gives us an outline of Stoneman's Raid.

There are a few details which may be of interest.

On leaving Warrenton Junction on April 29 the following supplies were carried:

Three days' rations, and three days' "short forage" (*i.e.* 10 lb. to the ration) were carried on the troop horses. Three days' rations, two days' "short forage" were carried on pack mules.

On the morning of the 30th, that is just after crossing Kelly's Ford, all the pack mules were sent to follow the Infantry Corps moving via Germanna Ford.

Not a wheel of any description except Artillery accompanied the Cavalry. Fifty rounds per carbine, twenty rounds per pistol were taken.

The Cavalry were able to live on the rations they carried, *and* on the country; there was no suffering on the part of man or horse for food. Foraging parties were sent out from time to time by regiments and generally came back with forage and provisions. I can find no record of how these were brought back, but I presume the inhabitants had to supply carriage as well



as foodstuffs. No accounts were kept of the amounts taken, nor was anything paid for.

The horses came back in an exhausted condition, suffering from sore backs and mud fever, owing to the great length of time they were frequently kept saddled. About 1,000 horses were left behind broken down, and many died shortly afterwards.

The pack mules were not a great success; they were not really required at all and were sent away after the first march. Sixty-six pack mules were allowed to each regiment. The strength of the regiments averaged 450 each. It was found necessary to detail one soldier for two mules.

The general consensus of opinion was that for a raid of this sort it would in future be advisable to go unencumbered with any sort of transport. The force should live on the country. Even Artillery was found to hamper the movements of Cavalry, a fact which many of us realised in South Africa.

Now, as regards the general employment of the Cavalry :

The orders given by Hooker have already been commented on, and an attempt has been made to show that it was greatly owing to Hooker's lack of Cavalry on the battlefield that he was defeated. He was unable to discover the movements of his enemy; while the Confederate Cavalry, ably commanded by Stuart, gave Lee information upon

which he based his great attack by Stonewall Jackson.

The Federal Cavalry were badly employed and the man to blame for this is, emphatically, Hooker, the C.-in-C., and not the Cavalry Commander. It is for this reason that all soldiers must study the handling of Cavalry just as much as that of Infantry or Artillery.

Probably the Cavalry could best have been employed to cover the march of Hooker's Right Wing via Kelly's Ford—Germanna Ford on to Chancellorsville, while the main body of the mounted troops should have been well forward on the right flank. The country certainly was not what might be called ideal cavalry country—but what of that?—it was the same for both sides, and we know that it in no way prevented Stuart from doing all that was required of him. The rifle would have been used more than the sword, and the American Cavalry on both sides knew how to use their rifles.

It is now generally accepted that it is only very exceptionally that the Cavalry can be better employed than on the main field of battle. So we must be careful not to send away the Cavalry on so-called "independent missions"; nor should a General lose control of it unless he has some remarkably good reason.

Attention has already been called to the way in which Hooker jumped to the conclusion that

the enemy would retreat; he seemed to take it for granted, a very dangerous thing to do in war.

Again, he was convinced that the Cavalry raid on Lee's Communications would bring the Confederate Army to their knees. He was wrong here too: as far as I can ascertain their Army was never in danger of running out of supplies; whether this was owing to the formation of advanced depots, or whether the railway communication was interrupted for too short a time, I cannot say. But as the railway from Richmond to Fredericksburg was only crossed by the two parties (Kilpatrick and Davis) and neither of them stayed any length of time on the railway, it is probable that the damage they did was quickly repaired.

In any case, if we want to cut an enemy's line of communication by rail, road, or sea, we must get a force actually on the route and *stay there*.

Drawing a red line across the enemy's communications on the map will not accomplish our object. Of course, if we can stay long enough to destroy a big bridge which will take some time to repair, we may do all that is required. But it must be a big bridge.

The obvious criticisms about Stoneman's method of carrying out his task are:—

He detached too large a force under General Averell. He practically divided his force in two

equal parts. His main task was to break up the enemy's line of communications and to oppose their retreat, and he should have kept as many troops as possible for that mission.

As things turned out, the railway was only slightly damaged; and, as the enemy did not retreat, the question of delaying them never arose.

But say it had arisen, what then? Take the situation on May 3, that is to say, after Stoneman had burst his bombshell, and the fragments were flying about the country. With Stoneman were about 500 men encumbered with 200 sick horses. The rest of the Cavalry were altogether out of Stoneman's control; he could not send them an order, he did not even know where they were.

What would he have done if information had come in that the enemy was retreating before Hooker? It is practically certain that he could have done nothing, except look after his own personal safety. In order to carry out his object, the Cavalry should have been kept more together.

The destruction of the railway could have been carried out much more effectively by a large force, say, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hanover Junction, and some important bridge, such as that over the South Anna, could have been destroyed. As a matter of fact Gregg did

send a party of about 300 to this bridge, but they were not strong enough to turn out the Confederate post, and the bridge was not destroyed.

If the enemy had retired either towards Richmond or Gordonsville, Stoneman could only have delayed their withdrawal if he had had a concentrated force under his immediate control.

This brings our story to a close.

I have only touched on the fringe of the subject; if soldiers really wish to follow the story in detail, they must read many books and follow out the movements on a good map.

For reasons already explained I have only dealt with the Federal operations, and I hope I have succeeded in bringing out the uncertainty of the information upon which a commander has to make decisions in war. Unless an officer has had the good fortune to command in the field or has studied war very closely, it is hard for him to realise what a strain this uncertainty makes on the resolution of a General. It is quite impossible to produce a situation in peace either at staff tours or at manœuvres which will in any way represent war's realities.

To summarise the principal lessons of the campaign :

1. From first to last there was hardly a moment

when Hooker had not victory in his grasp. All that was required was the resolution to strike a blow—a real blow with every available man. As Lincoln said: “Gentlemen, in your next fight put in all your men.”

2. The first really big mistake was the delay at Chancellorsville on April 30, and the further delay on May 1 caused by Hooker’s anxiety to await the arrival of the III Corps before continuing the advance. It will be remembered that Hooker did not advance till 11 a.m. on May 1, although on the previous day the V Corps had marched only five miles, and the XI and XII Corps only eleven.

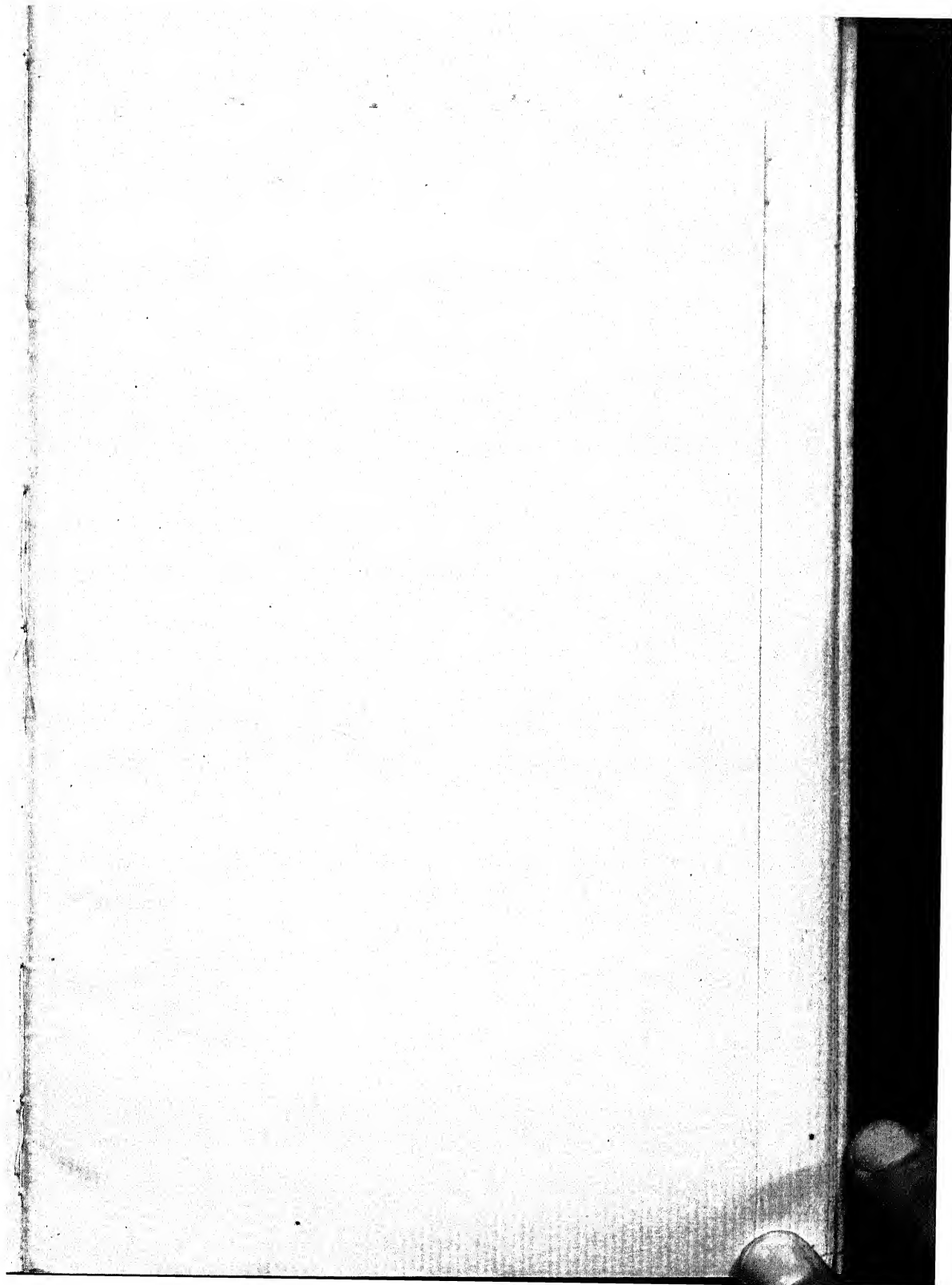
3. When the advance did take place, it was not made in full strength—only two Corps going forward, while three Corps remained about Chancellorsville.

4. Then we come to the order to fall back on Chancellorsville as soon as the enemy was encountered. An example of what the Americans call “cold feet” (on the part of Hooker, not of the troops).

5. I have endeavoured to show that when two Columns are closing in on an enemy, it is almost always essential for both Columns to advance vigorously. It is a mistake to tell the Columns to attack and then qualify the order with “ifs” and “provided thats.”

6. The Confederates won this battle, not because







their troops were better than the Federals, but because Lee's personality dominated the battlefield—as did that of F. Lee at the Cavalry action at Kellyville. The Confederate Commander was determined to win and was prepared to take great risks; while Hooker was thinking more of saving himself from defeat, and consequently seemed incapable of taking the risks which must be run if victory is to be gained.

7. Although no details have been given of the Confederate operations, I think it is obvious that Stonewall Jackson's flank march on May 2 was an extremely risky business. It is not to be expected that an enemy will always be as complaisant as Hooker and Howard (the Commander of the XI Corps). Because Jackson was successful in this particular case, it by no means follows that we should take it as an example to be followed blindly.

The information which led to the flank march would probably never have been obtained if Hooker had not sent Stoneman away from the battlefield—or even if he had handled properly the small force of Cavalry available. Consider also what would have happened if Jackson's force, while it was stretched out in column of route, had been strongly attacked by Hooker. If the reader will examine Map No. 17, he will see that at 2 p.m. the advanced guard was at the junction of the Brock Road and the Germanna plank road;

for eight miles the Column stretched, all moving on a single road—the rear-guard was fighting at the Furnace. A strong attack against the head of the marching Column would have rolled it up before the troops could deploy. Wellington's great blow at Salamanca, under somewhat similar circumstances, will be recalled.

If we examine the 5 p.m. situation on Map No. 17, we see that it took Jackson some three hours to deploy sufficient men to enable him to deliver the attack in adequate depth. If ever a General was tempted to make a premature attack it must have been Jackson on that occasion; the enemy were within 1,000 yards of the Confederate line of battle, and might at any moment realise the danger and deploy troops to meet the coming blow. Yet Jackson waited patiently for three long hours; he knew war too well to risk defeat in detail by making a piecemeal attack. He was not aiming at a petty success, but was determined to strike a solid blow that would decide the battle.

Notice Jackson's method of deployment: each Division in line and one behind the other. This, of course, meant that when the second line supported the first there would be considerable confusion, and the Divisional and Brigade Commanders would inevitably lose control. If the third line was also brought up the situation would naturally be even worse. Probably no

one realised the disadvantages of the formation more than Jackson, but it could hardly be avoided, as he had to deploy from one long column of route.

Much the same situation was forced on Jackson at Fredericksburg, but for a different reason, as has already been explained.

8. Note that Jackson made his attack so late in the evening that there was not sufficient daylight to bring the battle to a successful conclusion. Those who have studied the battle of Ferozeshah will remember that the Sikh army was saved from destruction for a similar reason.

9. We know now that when Sedgwick recrossed the river at Bank's Ford, Lee proposed to turn once more on Hooker in one last effort to destroy the Federal Army. Nothing but Hooker's withdrawal prevented the attack being made. It is difficult to believe that it could have ended in anything but a bloody repulse. The Confederate soldiers had been marching and fighting for seven days, the fighting had been severe and the men must have been physically exhausted. Hooker had made many mistakes, but this withdrawal was the worst mistake of all.

10. Hooker's handling of his Cavalry was bad. How greatly he was handicapped by Stoneman's absence must be clear to all, and there is little more to be said on that subject.

Even the small force of Cavalry left with



Hooker's army (Pleasanton's 1,200) was split up and never acted as a complete unit, except perhaps on May 2.

Averell's Cavalry (3,500 strong) when they rejoined via Ely's Ford were not used offensively.

That the Federal Cavalry could fight when properly led was proved only a few months later at Brandy Station and Gettysburg. No blame can be attached to the Federal troopers for their failure to achieve anything at Chancellorsville; they would have responded to any call—but none was made.

It is a relief to turn to the Southern Cavalry, and to see how boldly their troopers worked through the densely wooded country. Every one will acknowledge that the Confederate Cavalry rendered valuable service. Much can be learnt about the handling of Cavalry by the study of Lee's campaigns.

11. The great lesson of the Chancellorsville campaign is that everything depends upon the resolution with which the plan is executed—in fact, *Fight to win*. This may sound easy enough on paper, but in reality there is nothing more difficult. In order that we should understand how difficult it is, we must realise what war is like—the uncertain information and the sort of scenes that will inevitably take place.

Remember also that while we are acutely aware of our own difficulties, we are ignorant of the



troubles which hamper the enemy : it is impossible to exaggerate the strain such conditions impose upon the resolution of a Commander.

Properly applied, Lincoln's advice, "*Gentlemen, in your next fight put in all your men,*" is as sound now as it was then.

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